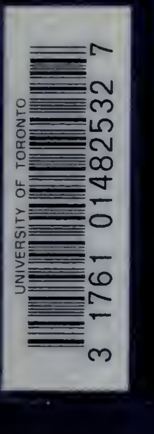
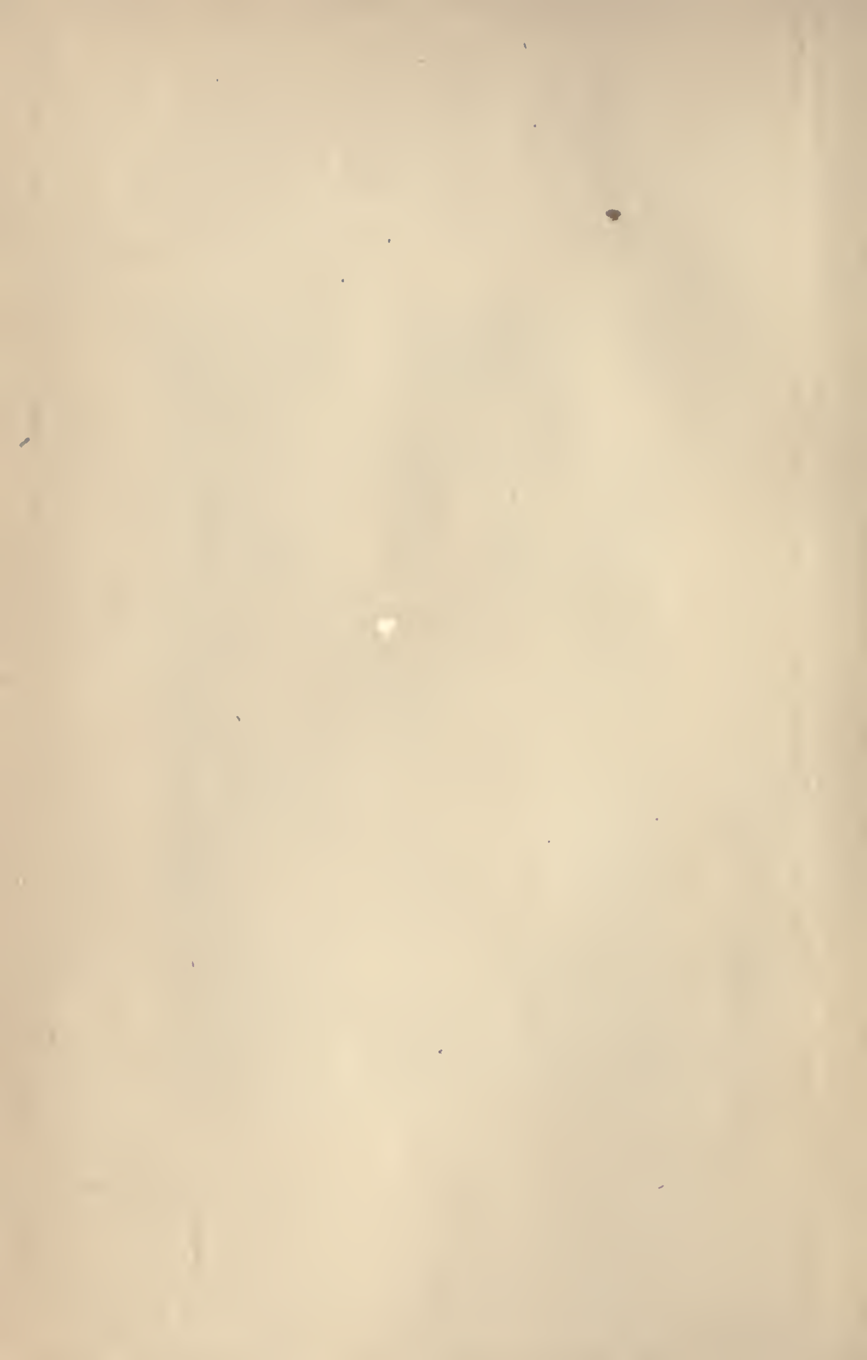

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ERNEST RENAN



ERNEST RENAN

In Memoriam

BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR MOUNTSTUART E. GRANT DUFF
G.C.S.I., F.R.S.

" J'ai tout critiqué et quoi qu'on en dise j'ai tout maintenu."—
Le Prêtre de Némi.

London
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CHAPTER I

Up to 1859 I had known Paris only as a passing traveller; but in the autumn of that year I took a house in the Champs Elysées, with a view to mixing in society. One of the people whom I most desired to know was M. Ernest Renan, whose name had become familiar during the later fifties to a limited circle of persons in England; and on the 26th October I was introduced to him at the Bibliothèque Impériale by Prince Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein. The acquaintance prospered, ripening into friendship, and from that day to M. Renan's death, his writings and sayings, his comings and goings, have been one of the greatest interests of my life. My relations with him were not seriously interrupted even by my long absence in Asia.

I feel impelled, now that he has gone from us, to put on paper the impressions about him and his work which I hold in common with

some of my friends who had the advantage of knowing him, and to try to attract some others who had not that advantage into the region where his power is chiefly felt. I must begin, however, by warning off these pages two very dissimilar classes of persons. They would have no interest whatever for those to whom the holding of certain dogmas is the *sine quâ non* of religion; and they would be utterly barren to those who consider that all religions belong to a bygone phase of human history, or that to occupy ourselves with them is to lose our time. I believe that, if human nature remains what we know by human nature, religion is indestructible, and that *that* religion will rally round it the most distinguished company of adherents which (while assiduously cultivating all the poetry and all the art fostered in the past by the higher forms of Christianity, and adhering strictly to the ideal of Christian life put before themselves by its best representatives, not in the cloister but in the world) shall frankly admit that it is impossible to control the human intellect by creeds or articles of any sort or kind.

In the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of the 15th November 1892, there is a long, interesting, and by no means unkindly article about Renan, by

the Vicomte E. M. de Vogüé; but it seems to me that it would have been hardly possible for an able man more completely to miss what was really important in Renan than his critic has contrived to do. He begins by setting forth what he considers to have been Renan's central doctrines. These central doctrines were in no sense peculiarly Renan's. Alter a little here and there the language in which M. de Vogüé has stated them, and they are neither more nor less than the central doctrines of everybody in England who has sat at the feet of the great masters of natural science in our time—the Darwins, the Huxleys, and so many more. That Renan should have, as a very young man, come to have such a grasp of those doctrines as he had, more than forty years before his death, is remarkable; but it is not in this that his importance lies. His importance lies in the fact that, having examined the whole of the religious history of humanity by the light of these doctrines, and by the additional light of his enormous knowledge of the historical sciences, he should have left so much subsisting, and not only subsisting, but established upon a basis from which, so far as I can see, no subsequent advance either of the natural or the historical sciences can ever dislodge it.

M. Paul Bourget saw much deeper than M. de Vogüé into the nature of the man whom he was studying when, in his *Psychologie Contemporaine*, he pointed out that *le soi-disant revolté* appeared in his true light as a thinker, profoundly religious, religious in his very heart of hearts. M. Bourget gave us English the credit of having discovered this, because Renan was invited to give the Hibbert Lectures in 1880, but, alas! the public of the Hibbert Lectures is not quite so large as our friendly critic would appear to think.

I have no pretension to write anything in the nature of a biography of Renan. There were many sides of his life, and there must have been many important circumstances in it, about which I know nothing; nor am I acquainted with some of his writings upon special subjects, such as the literary history of France in the fourteenth century, nor with his labours on Semitic Inscriptions. What I have to say however will, I think, be most conveniently said if fitted on to a biographical framework, and such facts or dates as I give will be correct as far as they go. I have just as little inclination to attempt anything in the nature of a controversial work, for the composition of which neither my studies nor my tastes at all qualify me. What I desire

to do is simply to represent, to those who will do me the honour to read these pages, Renan and his writings, as they appeared to one who was very much interested in both, and who is under the impression that his work in the world was not negative, but constructive in the highest degree.

Without further preface I proceed to my subject.

Ernest Renan was born at Tréguier, in the department of the Côtes du Nord, on the 27th February 1823. His father came of a race which had been given for generations to the life of the sea. He owned a small vessel and supported his family by his industry ; but he was a Breton of the Bretons, full of their dreamy unpractical fantasies, and died, in a very melancholy way, while his famous son was still a child. His wife was of mixed parentage, her mother having Gascon blood, and she brought to the management of the family a solidity of judgment and a courageous gaiety which were very foreign to her husband's nature. Ernest Renan was fond of dwelling on the fact that in him, for the first time, many generations of humble and unlettered but not ungifted people found at length a voice and an interpreter.

The house where he was born still stands, and

was readily shown me in 1876. Tréguier is a quaint little place and not unlike some small Scotch towns. When indeed Renan landed at the mouth of the Deveron, on his yachting voyage with Prince Napoleon to the Arctic Circle in 1870, I think he must have been inclined to fancy that he had seen, long years before, something like the place which then met his eyes. The north-eastern corner of Scotland must have, at one period of its history, resembled the Atlantic seaboard of Brittany not a little. The same wind-swept desolation in the open country, the same masses of furze, the same comparative richness in the river valleys, the same dependence on the sea, existed in both. In both the languages belonged to the Celtic stock, and in both there was a great deal of local devotion to Saints who had but little in common with those to whom the great body of Christians paid their vows. The wide difference, which exists nowadays between the two districts, was brought about mainly by two causes. The first was the fact that the Celtic element was reinforced in Brittany, in the fifth century, by an immigration from Wales, while in north-eastern Scotland the Celtic element, everywhere traceable in the names of places and persons, was overpowered by Saxon and Scandinavian settlers. The second

was the comparative nearness of Brittany to the centre of Western Christianity, which enabled the Roman Church to annex it to the great ecclesiastical centre of Tours, and conquered the land to Catholicity, so completely that the local Saints lived on as merely subordinate personages, having their chapels no doubt, but very little recognised in the Parish Church. Tréguier itself and its Cathedral were a great focus of Catholic influences. Such they were for ages before the first French Revolution; such they were again during the Restoration.

When he began to feel the coming on of old age, Renan wrote an account of some passages in his earlier years and published them under the title of *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, but he is careful to explain in his preface that in writing this book he had Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit* in his mind, and that his statements are not meant to be taken too literally. The main lines of the narrative, however, are correct. He was brought up entirely by priests, and these the strictest and worthiest imaginable—excellent Latinists, respectable mathematicians, for whom French literature ended with the younger Racine, but who grounded their pupil extremely well in the classics and brought him up in the practice of all the Christian virtues. He

retained, till he closed his eyes, the strongest affection and respect for them. "The fact is," he remarks in one passage, "that what is said about the morals of the clergy is, as far as my experience goes, absolutely without foundation. I passed thirteen years of my life in the hands of priests without ever seeing the very shadow of a scandal; I have never known any save good priests."

Mrs. Crawford, the writer of a sympathetic article on Renan in the *Fortnightly Review* for November 1892, says:—

"The last of his old clerical teachers at Tréguier, the Abbé Pasco, died, after long years of suffering, when the impression of *La Vie de Jésus* was fresh on the world. In dying, he asked God as a last favour to bring back his best-loved pupil to the religion of his fathers, and he was so full of faith that his prayer was heard as to exhort those around him to be of good comfort, and regard Renan as back again in the Catholic Church."

If he had remained in his native district Renan would doubtless have become a priest like those under whom he studied, though with more literary ability, would have been known in the neighbourhood and have gradually risen to some of the higher offices of the Church. This

was not, however, in his destiny. He retained nevertheless what he thought was most valuable in the teaching of his first masters. What that was he has himself told us :—

"Mes maîtres m'enseignèrent, d'ailleurs, quelque chose qui valait infiniment mieux que la critique ou la sagacité philosophique : ils m'apprirent l'amour de la vérité, le respect de la raison, le sérieux de la vie. Voilà la seule chose en moi qui n'ait jamais varié."

Renan had now passed the age of fifteen, and a great change was about to come into his life. The Abbé Dupanloup, later well-known as the Bishop of Orleans, was in 1838 the head of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, one of the most remarkable schools which has ever been seen in France or elsewhere. He possessed an extraordinary power over boys, and not only managed his whole establishment without any punishments, save an expression of blame, but contrived to stimulate the minds of his pupils as I suppose no other schoolmaster ever did.

The school was recruited chiefly in two ways —first, by getting parents in the highest ranks of French society to send their children thither, which they did most gladly, for the Abbé Dupanloup became, after his share in the official recantation of M. de Talleyrand, *persona gra-*

tissima in the Faubourg St. Germain ; and partly by getting agents in the provinces to pick up the cleverest boys, even in the most out-of-the-way places, from Brittany to Savoy, and to forward them to Paris. The large fees, paid by the children of wealthy families, enabled him to give gratuitous education to the others ; but the pupils knew nothing of this, and the most perfect equality reigned throughout the school —or rather there were no distinctions made, except in favour of superior abilities, and the boys, who possessed such, were heroes to the rest. The education was almost purely literary, and next to no positive knowledge was conveyed ; but a premium was put on the production of good Latin verses and rhetorical compositions of every kind. When Renan received quite suddenly an imperative summons to become a pupil of Saint-Nicolas he had just obtained every prize in his class, and was recruiting a little in the country :—

"J'étais en vacances chez un ami, dans un village près de Tréguier ; le 4 Septembre, dans l'après-midi, un exprès vint me chercher. Je me rappelle ce retour comme si c'était d'hier. Il y avait une lieue à faire à pied à travers la campagne. Les sonneries pieuses de *l'Angelus* du soir, se répondant de paroisse en paroisse,

versaient dans l'air quelque chose de calme, de doux et de mélancholique, image de la vie que j'allais quitter pour toujours. Le lendemain je partais pour Paris ; le 7, je vis des choses aussi nouvelles pour moi que si j'avais été jeté brusquement en France de Tahiti ou de Tombouctou."

Arrived in Paris, and plunged into the strange world which awaited him there, the young Breton took at first anything but kindly to his new life, and had an attack of home-sickness so violent that he became most seriously ill. More fortunate, however, than one or two of his contemporaries, he recovered, and underwent, during the next three years, all the characteristic influences of the intellectual forcing-house into which he had been transplanted.

The romantic movement, with Victor Hugo at its head, was running breast-high, and it rushed through Saint-Nicolas like a torrent. To his old Breton teachers, as we have seen, the whole literature of the nineteenth century was a sealed book, but now he was in the very mid-stream of Parisian thought.

Yet another change, however, was soon to befall him, for when he passed from Saint-Nicolas to the Séminaire of Issy, there to go through

two years of philosophical study, he came once more into a totally new atmosphere. Issy was dependent upon Saint-Sulpice, to which it was the avenue, and was governed entirely by the traditions of that great foundation. Now these were diametrically opposed to all the works and ways of Dupanloup and his Saint-Nicolas. They were the traditions of the first Saint-Nicolas—the Saint-Nicolas of 1640. At Issy they treated all the Latin verses, all the rhetorical exercises, all the literature, as mere trifling. The philosophy which had obtained the sanction of the Church was alone held in honour. Saint-Nicolas was penetrated through and through with the life of 1840. Issy had hardly got beyond the eighteenth century. One of the most interesting chapters of the *Souvenirs* is the one which describes that institution and the different professors, whose strongly-contrasted intellects and characters gave it its colour. Renan sometimes regretted that he had not acted upon a suggestion which was made to him while he was there, and abandoned his studies for the priesthood to embrace another career. He was strongly attracted at that time by the Natural Sciences, and especially by Biology. Later in life he thought that if he had devoted himself to it in youth he might in some ways

have anticipated Darwin. This, however, was not to be, and he passed from Issy to Saint-Sulpice, in Paris, there to study theology after having been well read in the Cartesian and Scotch philosophy, especially in that of Reid.

The theological studies pursued at Saint-Sulpice were divided into two parts—the study of dogma and the study of moral philosophy. The first of these comprised, in addition to some prefatory matters, fifteen treatises, at the base of which was one known as that of "The True Religion," in which the supernatural character of the Christian faith is sought to be demonstrated. Of course, when there is a question of demonstration, Reason is the Supreme Court of Appeal, and Saint-Sulpice abhorred the position defended by Lamennais during his Catholic period, when he maintained that you must begin by Faith and proceed to Reason, not arrive by Reason at Faith.

The moral philosophy course was composed of a dozen treatises, all linked with each other and with the dogmatic teaching by stanchions of iron. The whole formed one vast edifice, in which it was to the last degree dangerous to move the smallest part, since every proposition great and small was vouched for by the Church, and the proving of any one of them

to be fallible shook the credit of the authority which maintained the absolute certainty of all alike.

In connection with the treatise of "The True Religion" it was of course necessary to study the Bible in the original languages, and Renan threw himself into that portion of his work with the utmost ardour. He was fortunate in becoming the pupil of M. Le Hir, a man of great ability and vast learning, of whom he has given a very interesting account.

Under the guidance of this excellent master, the young Sulpician made so rapid an advance that he was soon himself entrusted with the preliminary course of Hebrew, and made astonishing progress in the Semitic languages generally. To study the Bible thoroughly, however, without going to German writers, has long been out of the question. Renan learned German, and soon became well versed in all that the greatest masters of Old Testament learning on the other side of the Rhine had got to tell. M. Le Hir read all these things, but was in no sort of way shaken by them.

He was a French Döllinger, but a Döllinger who would have submitted his judgment to the conclusions of the Council of 1870. The mould in which he was cast, however,

was a most peculiar one. The average student of Saint-Sulpice, we may be pretty sure, kept out of difficulties by giving but little attention to any part of the studies to which he was invited, save to those which were concerned with ready-made answers to objections, just sufficient to pass muster in the ordinary intercourse of a priest with such of his flock as might have picked up some superficial doubts.

To an untiring all-devouring student like Renan this was impossible. Nothing could have saved him from seeing that the whole edifice of Sulpician theology was mined, except the marvellous power possessed by M. Le Hir of not attempting to draw conclusions which, to most men who knew as much, would have been inevitable. Some of us have fallen in with one or more persons like M. Le Hir, but they are extraordinarily rare. The majority of good Catholics would tell you that they had no doubt whatever about the dogmas of their Church; they take them for granted, and lead excellent lives in accordance more or less with the prescriptions of their creed. They do not dream of digging down to its foundations, and of seeing on what they are laid. Why should they? The system they adopt is a very good working compromise, well fitted for the

threescore years and ten, at least. A youth, however, who had very strong reasoning powers, who had the vocation of the scholar, and who had to put to himself the question, not, Am I to live according to the prescriptions of the Catholic Church? but, Am I to go on teaching all my life Catholic dogmas which I have come to believe not to be true? was in quite a different position, and after long and terrible struggles Renan determined to abandon the career for which he had been destined. The long letter which he wrote to his director on the 6th September 1845 is a document of the deepest interest, which no unprejudiced person could read without seeing that it was dictated by the most transparent sincerity and the noblest motives. I will quote only one paragraph. It will be remembered that the letter was addressed to a person who, in the nature of things, had known the life of the writer for some years in its minutest particulars:—

"Au moins ceux qui me connaissent avoueront, j'espère, que ce n'est pas l'intérêt qui m'a éloigné du Christianisme. Tous mes intérêts les plus chers ne devaient-ils pas m'engager à le trouver vrai? Les considérations temporelles contre lesquelles j'ai à lutter eussent suffi pour en persuader bien d'autres; mon cœur a besoin

du Christianisme ; l'Evangile sera toujours ma morale ; l'Eglise a fait mon éducation, je l'aime. Ah ! que ne puis-je continuer à me dire son fils ? Je la quitte malgré moi ; j'ai horreur de ces attaques déloyales où on la calomnie ; j'avoue franchement que je n'ai rien de complet à mettre à la place de son enseignement ; mais je ne puis me dissimuler les points vulnérables que j'ai cru y trouver et sur lesquels on ne peut transiger, vu qu'il s'agit d'une doctrine où tout se tient et dont on ne peut détacher aucune partie."

In connection with this should be read the letters published in the Appendix to the *Souvenirs*.

On the 4th June 1836 Madame Albert de La Ferronays wrote in her diary :—[1]

"Je fus à la grande messe à Saint-Sulpice. Dans cette même église, avant mon abjuration, j'avais souvent fait vivement cette prière : 'Oh un moment de foi, d'espérance, et d'amour, et y mourir !' "

In November 1845 Renan wrote to his friend who became later the Abbé Cognat :—

"Oh ! que j'en voulais à ma raison de m'avoir ravi mes rêves ! Je passais une partie de mes soirées dans l'église de Saint-Sulpice, et là je cherchais à croire ; mais je ne pouvais. Oh !

[1] *Récit d'une Sœur*, vol. i. 407.

oui, mon ami, ces jours compteront dans ma vie ; s'ils n'en furent les plus décisifs, ils en furent au moins les plus pénibles. A vingt-trois ans, recommencer comme si je n'avais pas encore vécu !"

The Jesuit in *John Inglesant* was surely right when he said, "Nothing but the Infinite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life."

CHAPTER II

On the 6th October 1845 Renan left Saint-Sulpice on the best terms with all the authorities there, although no longer able to follow their guidance.

His old master Dupanloup, who was incapable of understanding the nature of his doubts, being indeed little of a theologian, and having no acquaintance whatever with Biblical studies, came forward at this time in the handsomest way and offered him pecuniary assistance. This he declined with many thanks, his sister Henriette, of whom I shall have to speak later, having sent him a sum of 1200 francs, which she had saved out of her salary as a governess in Poland, to enable him to exist till he obtained remunerative work. This he very soon did. His wants were of the smallest, and he hardly touched at all the sum thus put at his disposal, which was nevertheless, as freeing him from immediate care, the corner-stone of all his

success in after-life. On quitting Saint-Sulpice he was employed for about a fortnight under Père Gratry at the Collège Stanislas. The two men, however, had nothing in common excepting amiability, and they soon parted company. Other small employments soon offered themselves, enabling him to live, and leaving him abundant leisure for his studies, which were twofold—first and principally, the same which he had pursued at Saint-Sulpice, carried on in a freer air; and secondly, natural science, pursued in common with M. Berthelot, who has since made a great name as a chemist, was for a time a Minister of State, and remained Renan's intimate friend till the death of the latter. With M. Berthelot he had endless conversations upon all those mysterious subjects which lie behind all science, all religion, all philosophy. Some of his conclusions as to these he has written down in the last chapter of his *Souvenirs* and elsewhere. His friends may, however, be permitted to say that, however much they may respect his judgment on matters of history and criticism, as to which he knew everything, he knew, on such matters as the object of this universe, just as much as Zadig.[1]

[1] "Il savait de la Métaphysique ce qu'on en a su dans tous les âges—c'est-à-dire fort peu de chose."

His speculations on them may be read, like those of a hundred other philosophers, as a method of passing time, agreeable to many minds; but to expect much more from them, at least in the present state of human knowledge, is to expect the impossible.

Meantime Renan was gradually making his way, as laymen do in Paris who devote themselves to letters. He passed, with extraordinary rapidity and success, all manner of examinations; he wrote for various periodicals; he gained in 1847 the Volney prize for an essay about the Semitic tongues; he published in 1848 a book on the origin of language, and he became known to some of the leading members of the Institut, more especially to M. Augustin Thierry, who in various ways exercised a decisive influence on his life.

If I were attempting to write a full account of that life I should have to give a very considerable space to the work called *L'Avenir de la Science* which he wrote at this time, although it was not published for more than forty years. It is a most marvellous performance; but as all that is best in it was worked up by its author, in subsequent publications, in a better form, it is unnecessary for me, having regard to the limited canvas which I am using, to say more about it.

The influence of M. Berthelot is to be seen in every page.

Wise friends interfered to prevent his entering the literary world "with this huge packet on his head," and in 1849 he was sent by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres on a literary mission to Italy, whence he brought back materials for a work on Averroes, which he soon produced.

The long life of that famous personage extended through nearly the whole of the twelfth century, and with him passed away the so-called Arabian philosophy, which had flourished for some 200 years in Andalusia under the ægis of tolerant rulers. Ibn Roschd was not so able as some of his predecessors, but he entered into their labours, and became known more widely outside than within the limits of Islam. The great Jewish philosopher Maimonides lived at the same time, studied his works, and spread the fame of the Moslem sage among his co-religionists, while Michael Scott interpreted him to Christendom. His knowledge, however, was not very great, and was derived from imperfect versions of Aristotle, Galen, and Ptolemy, from Mahommedan Canon law and Arabic poetry. He was the type of unbelief to mediæval Christendom as incarnating

the religion of the Prophet. Hence the name Averroism, which, as may be easily supposed, became in the course of ages something very different from the opinions of Averroes, was applied to many modes of thought which agreed in having a certain heretical flavour, and was consequently the object of intense aversion to the Dominicans. At a later period it was not less violently attacked by the Humanists, but that was not so much on account of its matter, as of the pedantic turn of language which its professors affected.

His Italian journey, which lasted eight months, produced on the mind of Renan the strongest possible impression. Amongst other things it introduced him to the world of Art. Writing of it in long after years he remarked, "A sort of warm damp wind relaxed my stiffness; nearly all my illusions of 1848 fell away."

He left in Italy a curious memorial of his stay. In the beginning of the year 1876 I was at Monte Casino and was looking in the visitors' books there, which are very carefully kept, for a signature with associations very far removed from those which are usually coupled with the name of one whom so many worthy people believe to have been a sort of Antichrist revived. The good priest who was assisting me turned

over a few pages and showed me the entry: "*Unum est necessarium et Maria elegit bonam partem.* ERNEST RENAN 1850."[1] To my guide the contrast between the Renan who wrote these words and the author of the *Origines du Christianisme* was very startling; but Renan no doubt meant in 1850 precisely what he would have meant had he used them, as he very easily might have done, in the last weeks of his life, and would, I daresay, have maintained that the meaning he gave to them was much closer to the sense in which they were originally used than was that commonly given.

I have mentioned that he won the Volney prize. The essay, by which he won it, was afterwards expanded by its author into the *Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques*, which was the most considerable work in point of size which he produced during the first period of his literary activity, the period before his mission to Phœnicia of which I shall soon speak. It is a book of very considerable importance, and did a great deal for its author's reputation as a scholar. Much however that it contains, of a

[1] I think I am right in my recollection that this was the form in which he quoted the familiar words. The Vulgate has, however, "*Unum est necessarium. Maria optimam partem elegit.*"

nature to interest the general public, is to be found in other works by him which are not intended for specialists. I will pass it by accordingly, merely quoting a brief account of it which I wrote in 1862 :—

"The *Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques* is divided into five books.

"In the first of these M. Renan describes the general character of the Semitic peoples and their languages, points out their original seat, and determines their distinctive peculiarities. We learn to appreciate the singular subjectivity of their intellect, their monotheistic tendencies, the simplicity and directness of their thought, the sensuousness of their speech, their gravity, their intolerance, their want of curiosity, their incapacity for political life and complicated organisation, their passionate selfishness, and their want of adaptability.

"We are carried back to the earliest period of their history. We trace their first migrations; we are taught to comprehend that the tenth chapter of Genesis is a geographical, not an ethnographical document. We see the effects of their earliest contact with the Aryan races in the account of the Tower of Babel. We make a circuit round their frontiers, observing the limits which encompassed them at the earliest period

at which they are known to us, and the boundaries which they afterwards reached. We examine the origin of their various dialects, and discuss the hypothesis of a primitive Semitic language.

"The second book is devoted to the Hebrew and the Phœnician. Some portions of it will not be found of much value to the general reader, but by far the greater part is perfectly intelligible to him, and of great importance to all students of the Old Testament.

"In the third book M. Renan passes to the consideration of the second period in the development of the Semitic languages, which he calls the Aramaic age. The first chapter of this division contains much that bears directly or indirectly upon Biblical studies. The second, which discusses the Nabathæan branch of the Aramaic literature, leads us far away from those paths of knowledge which most of us are called to tread. The third, which is devoted to the Christian branch of the same literature, comes nearer to the circle of studies in which those who are not Semitic scholars usually move, without, however, passing its circumference. In the fourth chapter, the spectacle of the contact of the Greek and the Semitic mind, during the Aramaic age, is more generally instructive.

"The next book carries us to Christian Abys-

sinia, and plunges us deep in the learning of pre-Islamite as well as Islamite Arabia. The fifth is devoted to general conclusions with regard to Semitic philology."

In the year 1856 Renan became a member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in succession to his friend Augustin Thierry, and his reputation began to spread in Germany.

I am not sure in what year the first edition of his *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse* was published, but the fourth, which is the one I possess, appeared in 1858. It consists of a series of detached Essays, some of which are amongst the most delightful of his productions, and as it is pre-eminently suited for general reading I must call attention to it in some detail.

To persons who propose making an acquaintance with Renan's writings I cannot too strongly recommend the reading of his prefaces, for they often contain some of his best work. This is the case with that which introduces us to his *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*, every page of which contains observations of the greatest interest, and sentences which are likely to remain in the memory.

The following passage from it must often have recurred to the minds of some of his

readers, when they have heard him severely criticised by persons who, themselves the very salt of the earth, little knew how much more important were the points on which he agreed with than those on which he differed from them :—

"Il est une région supérieure des âmes élevées dans laquelle se rencontrent souvent sans s'en douter ceux qui s'anathématisent ; cité idéale que contempla le Voyant de l'Apocalypse où se pressait une foule que nul ne pouvait compter de toute tribu, de toute nation, de toute langue, proclamant d'une seule voix le symbole dans lequel tous se réunissent : 'Saint, Saint, Saint est celui qui est, qui a été, et qui sera.'"

The long article on *L'Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*, most valuable at the time it was written, has been superseded by the author's great work on the same subject.

It is otherwise with that on the *Historiens Critiques de Jésus*, which remains exceedingly interesting as an introduction to the much discussed book which he published a few years later. In this paper he traces the rise and progress of the various schools of interpretation of the Gospels, devoting special attention to the great work of Strauss, to whom he gives the credit which is his due, while at the same time

pointing out how seriously he had been led astray by the reaction against the Euhemerism of the Rationalistic school as well as by his devotion to the system of Hegel. Strauss, at the period when he published his *first* "Life of Jesus," the only one which was in existence when the essay I am noticing was written, was not a radical but a theologian of the extreme liberal school—applying to the interpretation of the New Testament the philosophy of the eminent man who then stood at the head of German thought, and who exercised a sway so much wider than that which has fallen to the lot of any one of his successors, that we see now he spake truly who said, "No after-conqueror shall ascend the vacant throne of Alexander."[1] A very interesting essay might be written upon the resemblances and the contrasts between Strauss and Renan; but for the present it is enough to remember that the one was a Suabian Protestant, the other a Breton Catholic. The leading idea which Renan developed in this paper, and retained to the end, is well given in its concluding paragraph, a portion of which I may cite; but every page of it, and it is very long, deserves careful study alike from those

[1] These words were spoken at the funeral of Hegel.

inclined to agree with and those who reprobate the views of its author :—

"Le philosophe, aussi bien que le théologien, doit donc reconnaître en Jésus les deux natures, séparer l'humain du divin et ne pas confondre dans son adoration le héros réel et le héros idéal. Il faut sans hésiter adorer le Christ, c'est-à-dire le caractère résultant de l'Evangile ; car tout ce qui est sublime participe au divin, et le Christ évangélique est la plus belle incarnation de Dieu dans la plus belle des formes. . . . Quant à l'homme de Galilée que les reflets de la divinité dérobent presque à nos regards, qu'importe s'il nous échappe ? Assurément l'historien doit souhaiter d'éclaircir un tel problème ; mais au fond les besoins de l'homme religieux et moral y sont peu intéressés. Et que nous importe ce qui s'est passé en Palestine il y a dix-huit cents ans ? Que nous importe que Jésus soit né dans telle ou telle bourgade, qu'il ait eu tels ou tels ancêtres, qu'il ait souffert tel ou tel jour de la semaine sacrée ? Laissons ces questions aux recherches des curieux. Les poèmes homériques seraient-ils plus beaux, s'il était prouvé que les faits qui y sont chantés sont tous des faits véritables ? L'Evangile serait-il plus beau, s'il était vrai qu'à un certain point de l'espace et de la durée

un homme a réalisé à la lettre les traits qu'il nous présente ? La peinture d'un sublime caractère ne gagne rien à sa conformité avec un héros réel. Le Jésus vraiment admirable est à l'abri de la critique historique ; il a son trône dans la conscience, il ne sera remplacé que par un idéal supérieur ; il est roi pour longtemps encore. Que dis-je ? sa beauté est éternelle, son règne n'aura pas de fin. L'Eglise a été dépassée, et s'est dépassée elle-même, le Christ n'a pas été dépassé. Tandis qu'un noble cœur aspirera à la beauté morale, tandis qu'une âme élevée tressaillera de joie devant la réalisation du divin, le Christ aura des adorateurs par la partie vraiment immortelle de son être."

The paper on the author of *The Imitation* is most charming and most characteristic. Renan thought that the author of that famous book was probably Gersen, the Abbot of St. Stephen's at Vercelli in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Of late there seems to have been a stronger current of opinion in favour of its having been composed, not only copied and made generally known, by à Kempis, but the question will probably never be really settled. Whoever he was, a more beautiful picture of what we could wish him to have been will never be painted than that which I copy :—

"Il ne sortit jamais de sa cellule de Verceil. Il ne lut d'Aristote que la première ligne, *Omnis homo naturaliter scire desiderat*, et il ferma le livre tout scandalisé : 'A quoi sert, dit-il, de savoir des choses sur lesquelles nous ne serons point examinés au jour du jugement ?' (Liv. I. chaps. ii. et iii.) C'est par là qu'il est incomplet, mais c'est par là aussi qu'il nous charme. Que je voudrais être peintre pour le montrer tel que je le conçois, doux et recueilli, assis en son fauteuil de chêne, dans le beau costume des bénédictins du Mont Cassin ! Par le treillis de sa fenêtre, on verrait le monde revêtu d'une teinte d'azur, comme dans les miniatures du 14e siècle : au premier plan, une campagne parsemée d'arbres légers, à la manière de Pérugin ; à l'horizon, les sommets des Alpes couverts de neige. . . . Ainsi je me le figurais à Verceil même, en feuilletant les manuscrits maintenant déposés au Dôme, et dont plusieurs peut-être ont passé par ses mains."

Another delightful paper is that on the "Lives of the Saints," written with reference to the great Bollandist Collection. Here is a passage which few people, not well acquainted with his writings, would have guessed to have been from the pen of Renan :—

"Le moment du triomphe des saints est

vraiment celui de leur mort. Leur vie, appréciée d'après nos idées modernes, semble imparfaite, en ce sens qu'ils ont été exclusifs, qu'ils n'ont vu les choses que par un seul côté, qu'ils ont manqué de critique et d'étendue d'esprit. Je ne souhaiterais pas leur vie, mais je suis jaloux de leur mort. A voir ces fins glorieuses et calmes, l'âme se relève et se fortifie ; on reprend quelque estime pour la nature humaine, on se persuade que cette nature est noble et qu'il y a lieu d'en être fier."

The paper on Feuerbach is, although that writer is now an extinct volcano, particularly valuable, on account of the light which it throws upon his critic's way of looking at the pre-Christian and Christian world. It should be read as a supplement, and to some extent as a corrective of the exceedingly striking Prayer on the Acropolis to be found in the *Souvenirs*. Those who do not know this fuller statement of his ideas will be apt to take some of the phrases in that prose-poem a little too seriously.

Very amusing and very true are his remarks with reference to M. Feuerbach's absurd statement that he had "quarrelled with God and the world":—

"Quand un Allemand se vante d'être impie, il ne faut jamais le croire sur parole. L'Alle-

mand n'est pas capable d'être irréligieux ; la religion, c'est-à-dire l'aspiration au monde idéal, est le fond même de sa nature. Quand il veut être athée, il l'est dévotement et avec une sorte d'onction. Que si vous pratiquez le culte du beau et du vrai ; si la sainteté de la morale parle à votre cœur ; si toute beauté et toute vérité vous reportent au foyer de la vie sainte ; que si, arrivés là, vous renoncez à la parole, vous enveloppez votre tête, vous confondez à dessein votre pensée et votre langage pour ne rien dire de limité en face de l'infini, comment osez-vous parler d'athéisme? Que si vos facultés, vibrant simultanément, n'ont jamais rendu ce grand son unique que nous appelons Dieu, je n'ai plus rien à dire ; vous manquez de l'élément essentiel et caractéristique de notre nature."

Most suggestive, too, are his observations in his account of Ary Scheffer's picture, "The Temptation of Christ," on the gradual change in the idea of Satan, from his first appearance in Persia through the Middle Age to our own times—Milton having been the chief agent in bringing about the more modern conception of the character.

A paper on Channing, although very good, belongs rather to the past. Perhaps its best

page is one upon the effects of the habitual reading of the Bible in the old-fashioned Protestant way, as distinguished from its serious and intelligent study on the one hand, or its cautious devotional use by the Catholic Church on the other.

If I pass without further mention over a paper upon Mahommed, and say nothing of one or two of minor interest, it is not because every line from the beginning to the end of the book is not worth reading.

Not long after the *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse* came the *Essais de Morale et de Critique*. In this book, too, the Preface is extremely valuable, and not least that portion of it which I proceed to quote, setting forth as it does not only the connection between the various essays which make up the volume, but striking the key-note of Renan's life and work :—

"Des voiles impénétrables nous dérobent le secret de ce monde étrange dont la réalité à la fois s'impose à nous et nous accable ; la philosophie et la science poursuivront à jamais, sans jamais l'atteindre, la formule de ce Protée qu'aucune raison ne limite, qu'aucun langage n'exprime. Mais il est une base indubitable que nul scepticisme n'ébranlera et où l'homme trouvera jusqu'à la fin des jours le point fixe

de ses incertitudes : le bien, c'est le bien ; le mal, c'est le mal. Pour haïr l'un et pour aimer l'autre, aucun système n'est nécessaire, et c'est en ce sens que la foi et l'amour, en apparence sans lien avec l'intelligence, sont le vrai fondement de la certitude morale et l'unique moyen qu'a l'homme de comprendre quelque chose au problème de son origine et de sa destinée. . . . Loin que j'aie jamais songer à diminuer en ce monde la somme de religion qui y reste encore, mon but, en tous mes écrits, a été bien au contraire d'épurer et de ranimer un sentiment qui n'a quelque chance de conserver son empire qu'en prenant un nouveau degré de raffinement. La religion, de nos jours, ne peut plus se séparer de la délicatesse de l'âme et de la culture de l'esprit. J'ai cru la servir en essayant de la transporter dans la région de l'inattaquable, au delà des dogmes particuliers et des croyances surnaturelles. Si celles-ci viennent à crouler il ne faut pas que la religion croule, et un jour viendra peut-être où ceux qui me reprochent comme un crime cette distinction entre le fond impérissable de la religion et ses formes passagères seront heureux de chercher un refuge contre des attaques brutales derrière l'abri qu'ils ont dédaigné."

I will not attempt to run through the *Essais*.

Several of them probably never would have had as much interest for English as for French readers, and the interest which attaches to some others is less than it would have been thirty years ago. No one who was not in the habit of meeting him, and their number becomes daily fewer, has any idea what a position M. Victor Cousin held in French society, or how daring an act it was on the part of a young man to find defects in so revered a personage even although he wrapped up his criticism in many folds of compliment. Neither the essay on him in this volume nor one which Renan wrote much later and published, near the end of his career, on the same subject would now, I think, find very numerous readers here, although both of them are full of subtle and profound remarks.

The two most important papers in the *Essais* for the present generation are, I think, those upon Lamennais and upon the poetry of the Celtic races. About each of these I will say a word.

The essay on Lamennais is important, first, from the interest which attaches to a person who not only occupied, to so great an extent, the minds of his contemporaries, but who laid the foundation of much that has been built up since his death, and secondly, from the resemblances

and contrasts between the history of himself and his critic. Both were Bretons; both were seminarists; both abandoned their original careers; both made their fame not in their native province but in Paris and the world; both wrote some of the most remarkable things written in their generation. The contrasts, however, are even greater than the resemblances. Lamennais breathed fire and fury against all his antagonists, and applied to every opinion which he abandoned the same system of eloquent hatred which he employed against all its gainsayers the day before he abandoned it. Renan's habitual way of treating his foes however bitter, was precisely that recommended in the Beatitudes. Lamennais knew little about history and next to nothing, at least till he had broken with the Church, of the documents on which Christianity is founded. Renan had deserved and won, more than thirty years before his death, the praise of so great an authority as Mommsen, who called him, in conversation with me, as far back as January 1862, *a true savant in spite of his beautiful style.* Renan produced no changes in the machinery of either Church or State. Lamennais did more than any single man to bring about the revolution in the Roman Communion which has so prodigiously increased

the power of the central authority and of such journals as the *Univers*, while diminishing in the same proportion the power of the Episcopate. Like another great ecclesiastic of his time, the turning point of whose career was the period so fateful to Lamennais, 1832 and 1833, I mean John Henry Newman, he will be best remembered, a hundred years hence, on account of some pages of unsurpassed loveliness. All his crazy politics, all his frantic tirades, will be as much forgotten as will be all that the great Cardinal has left behind him, save about the same amount of prose and a little verse which are permanent additions to the treasures of our language and to the glories of our century. Indirectly, however, both of them produced vast and enduring effects upon the two great organisations which they abandoned. I have alluded already to the changes which Lamennais worked in the Catholic Church after he had left it, and it is even now impossible to calculate how far may yet extend the force of the movement which Newman began in the Church of England, a movement untoward in some respects, but in many more of the greatest value, not to philosophy or history or exegesis, but to the grace and beauty of English life.

While pointing out, with perfect fairness, the

defects of Lamennais, Renan gives him all the praise he deserves for his marvellous merits:—

"Le tour absolu des opinions de Lamennais, qui nous a valu tant de pauvres raisonnements, tant de jugements défectueux, nous a valu aussi les cinquante pages de grand style les plus belles de notre siècle."

He is unstinted in his admiration for the *Paroles d'un Croyant*, a book which he wisely says may be praised without reserve, on the understanding that no one should dream of imitating it, and he brings out extremely well the exquisite oases of verdure which are interspersed among these burning pages. Some of my readers may remember a story told by Sainte-Beuve. He was carrying the *Paroles* through the press, on behalf of his friend, when the head of the establishment came to him and said, "What on earth is this book you are having struck off? The whole of the printing-house is on fire."

Wonderful as it is, however, I am not sure that there is anything in it which I admire so much as a prose poem belonging to its author's Catholic period called *Les Morts*. It is too long to quote here, but it can be read in one of Sainte-Beuve's earlier publications, *Portraits Contemporains*. Queen Sophie of Holland was

assuredly right when she said, speaking of Lamennais, "Some of his thoughts are as fine as anything that has ever been said in human language."

The paper on Celtic poetry derives its value to students of Renan, from its being the fullest exposition which he has given of his views about the race to which he belonged, and will be read with sympathy by all who believe that those are in the right who encourage it to study its past, and to seek success in literature rather than in any other career. In that, the example of Renan himself, far the greatest prose writer who has lived in our times, is there to prove that the Celts may still do great things, while all the efforts they make to attain political importance are doomed, in the very nature of things, to hopeless, and indeed ridiculous, failure.

The fortune of war decided, many hundred years ago, that they, the last remnants of a race which had once been powerful, were to be useful elements in the constitution of nations mainly composed of their conquerors; but to be nations only in a poetical and not in a political sense. The Bretons indeed saw this long ago, and there is not the most distant chance of their again attempting even the sort of provincial uprising against the central authority which

formed one of the chapters of the French Revolution. As to asserting for themselves a national position, that is a folly of which, in their wildest moments, they have never dreamed.

The essay on the Secret History of Procopius takes a moderate and sensible view of a much contested subject. Far more attractive is one upon the Reminiscences of Professor Creuzer, the author of the once famous *Symbolik.* It contains a passage curious in several ways, first because it shows that Renan believed the Greeks to have done more in music than most musicians would concede, and secondly, in that it betrays the fact that this heaven-stormer preferred the old chants of the Church to all other musical compositions!

"Combien de personnes, si elles étaient sincères, avoueraient de même qu'elles préfèrent à toute la musique de l'Italie et même de l'Allemagne une belle psalmodie, le rhythme de ces vieilles hymnes qui ont conservé leur physionomie primitive! Et après tout, n'auraient-elles pas, au besoin, une théorie pour justifier cette préférence? Qu'est-ce que la musique d'église (je ne parle pas de la musique sacrilège qui, de nos jours, usurpe ce nom; j'entends le plain-chant dans sa large et naïve simplicité),

qu'est-ce que le plain-chant si ce n'est la grande et vraie musique, la musique des Grecs? Où faut-il aller pour entendre, à l'heure qu'il est, l'air charmant qui rendit si populaire dans l'antiquité le nom de Sapho? A l'église. Où faut-il aller pour entendre le rhythme des odes de Pindare, rhythme sans lequel, il faut l'avouer, ces singulières compositions n'ont guère plus de valeur pour nous que des cantates privées de leur chant? A l'église: un docte académicien l'a prouvé. Dire qu'on n'aime que le chant d'église, cela veut donc dire tout simplement qu'on a le gout ancien en musique. Or c'est là un aveu qu'on peut faire sans honte; il est certain, en effet, que, si la notation musicale des Grecs nous était parvenue d'une façon pleinement intelligible, on verrait que leur musique était du même ordre que leur sculpture, et que dans cet art, comme dans tous les autres, la Grèce a donné la mesure du grand, du noble, du simple, de tout ce qui saisit profondément l'âme et l'élève sans effort."

The essay on M. Augustin Thierry is less interesting as an account of that writer, than from the insight it gives into Renan's views about history. He defends his friend against the attacks of some persons belonging to the class of collectors of materials for history rather

than of historians, showing that Thierry's object was to give correct general effects rather than to be minutely in accordance with ancient texts. These ancient texts themselves, Renan thought, wherever they went into detail, became highly subjective. Seldom, indeed, was the chronicler present when the events occurred which he chronicled. Only the very largest of historical facts are absolutely and indisputably true. Whenever and wherever the history of long past events is given fully we must be satisfied with the *à peu près*.

There are a number of other papers in the volume—all valuable. Some of them at the time they were published were of more importance than several I have mentioned; that, for example, on M. de Sacy and the Ecole Libérale was full of wise political reflections on the Second Empire, and what led to it; but the Second Empire has gone the way of many other evil things, and the Ecole Libérale to which M. de Sacy belonged has been replaced by something very different and much inferior to it. Two Italian articles which I read with the deepest interest, a generation ago, also belong to a vanished world. Those which I have noticed are, I believe, the best adapted to the wants of the present day.

In 1859 Renan published a translation of the Book of Job. He explained, in some prefatory remarks, that he considered it to be the ideal of a Semitic poem, and that his version was intended to be a sort of commentary upon his work, already alluded to, on the Semitic languages. He proceeded to set forth his system of translation, which was to give the full force of the meaning of each passage as he conceived it, without sinning against the rules of the French language, or affecting a literalism so close as to frustrate his main object, by producing something which to the ordinary educated Frenchman would present only a series of enigmas. Hardly in any place has he ventured to introduce a quite new rendering. His plan was to select, from the library of books which have been written on the interpretation of this venerable text, those renderings which seemed to him, after careful study, to be the best. He believed that the passages in it which remain obscure, after all that has been written, are destined to remain obscure for ever.

The brief Preface is followed by a long Introduction. We learn from it that Renan believed the Poem of Job to belong to that great school of parabolist philosophy which was the heritage not merely of the Israelitish branch of the

Semitic race but of other portions of it, such as the Idumean sept of Teman. He explains that by parabolist literature he meant the sententious way of writing with which we are familiar in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Ecclesiasticus. Some of the arguments which he uses in various parts of the Introduction have not now the force which they had before the comparatively modern date of many of the institutions once attributed to Moses had been generally recognised.

Renan translates the famous passage in the nineteenth chapter :—

> "Car, je le sais, mon vengeur existe,
> Et il apparaîtra enfin sur la terre.
>
> "Quand cette peau sera tombée en lambeaux,
> Privé de ma chair, je verrai Dieu.
>
> "Je le verrai par moi-même ;
> Mes yeux le contempleront, non ceux d'un autre ;
> Mes reins se consument d'attente au-dedans de moi."

It is a pity that in the Revised Version of our own Bible the translators have allowed the word "redeemer" to remain, although they must have known perfectly well the misconceptions to which it has given rise. The alternative reading which they give in the margin is very nearly the same as Renan's.

The speaker was thinking of the near future when, as he trusted, God would descend to avenge him on his enemies, after his flesh was consumed, but while his skeleton remained intact. The idea of the immortality even of the soul, to say nothing of the body, had never entered into a Semitic mind when the Poem of Job was composed.

Renan thinks that its date must be put somewhere about the time of Hezekiah, before the religious changes of Josiah had altered the character of the Hebrew people. If his view is correct, it belongs to a period when Greece had songs but could not write them, and when Rome did not exist.

As to the meaning of the whole world-famous debate it could not, I think, be better summed up than it is in this passage :—

"La question que l'auteur se propose est précisément celle que tout penseur agite, sans pouvoir la résoudre ; ses embarras, ses inquiétudes, cette façon de retourner dans tous les sens le nœud fatal sans en trouver l'issue, renferment bien plus de philosophie que la scolastique tranchante qui prétend imposer silence aux doutes de la raison par des réponses d'une apparente clarté. La contradiction, en de pareilles matières, est le signe de la vérité ; car

le peu qui se révèle à l'homme du plan de l'univers se réduit à quelques courbes et à quelques nervures dont on ne voit pas bien la loi fondamentale et qui vont se réunir à la hauteur de l'infini. Maintenir en présence les uns des autres les besoins éternels du cœur, les affirmations du sentiment moral, les protestations de la conscience, le témoignage de la réalité, voilà la sagesse. La pensée générale du livre de Job est ainsi d'une parfaite vérité. C'est la plus grande leçon donnée au dogmatisme intempérant et aux prétentions de l'esprit superficiel à se mêler de théologie ; elle est en un sens le résultat le plus haut de toute philosophie, car elle signifie que l'homme n'a qu'à se voiler la face devant le problème infini que le gouvernement du monde livre à ses méditations. Le piétisme hypocrite d'Eliphaz et les intuitions hardies de Job sont également en défaut pour résoudre une telle énigme ; Dieu lui-même se garde d'en livrer le mot, et, au lieu d'expliquer l'univers à l'homme, il se contente de montrer le peu de place que l'homme occupe dans l'univers."

On a later page Renan adds what remained his last word on these tremendous subjects, though he now and then in old age slipped in speaking of them into an ironical tone which he

carefully suppressed in his earlier period, and which after all meant very little :—

"L'avenir de l'homme individuel n'est pas devenu plus clair, et peut-être est-il bon qu'un voile éternel couvre des vérités qui n'ont leur prix que quand elles sont le fruit d'un cœur pur. Mais un mot que ni Job ni ses amis ne prononcent a acquis un sens et une valeur sublimes : le devoir, avec ses incalculables conséquences philosophiques, en s'imposant à tous, résout tous les doutes, concilie toutes les oppositions, et sert de base pour réédifier ce que la raison détruit ou laisse crouler. Grâce à cette révélation sans équivoque ni obscurité, nous affirmons que celui qui aura choisi le bien aura été le vrai sage. Celui-là sera immortel ; car ses œuvres vivront dans le triomphe définitif de la justice, le résumé de l'œuvre divine qui s'accomplit par l'humanité."

CHAPTER III

Renan was now in the very prime of life. His health was good and his powers had reached their maturity. His manner had that charming gentleness which is characteristic of the best of the Catholic clergy. His conversation was very copious and limpid, not dealing much in epigram or anecdote, but very easy and very informing. The first time I talked with him at any great length was two days after I made his acquaintance, on the 28th October 1859. He spoke a good deal of the Jewish scholars in France; of Salvador; of Munk whom he put highest; and of Cahen, the author of a translation of the Old Testament in, if I remember right, twenty-two volumes, to which my attention had been attracted by a curious little book I had met with, written by some one who, having been brought up in the purely negative school which prevailed so much in France in the earlier

days of the century, had in declining life fallen in with Cahen's translation, and, much surprised, wrote to point out that the Bible, which he had apparently never before seen, was really a very interesting work! I recollect that, *à propos* of certain Jewish writers on Biblical subjects, Renan dwelt at some length on the want of tact and *nuance* in the Semitic mind. Then we talked of the Protestant school of theologians at Strasbourg, who were at that time so useful as a connecting link between the great Biblical scholars of Germany and that small section of educated men in France who cared anything for such matters. Carl Schwarz of Gotha, the author of an exceedingly brilliant little history of German theology since the appearance of Strauss's famous book, was talked of; so was the Italian Lanci, and the present Master of Balliol, who was just beginning to pass into the period of persecution which did so much for his fame, and which has been almost forgotten by the new generation.

Renan spoke highly too of the younger Coquerel, whose influence, much to the disgust of the fanatical party, was getting stronger and stronger in the French Protestant Church. I was surprised to find that he put Lacordaire much above Ravignan, for I remembered that a great English lawyer, who had heard the

latter at Farm Street, had said that "he opened to him a new chapter in the human mind"; but I suppose that Ravignan's influence, which was unquestionably very great, was only felt by those who were more or less inclined to agree with him, at least in what he would have considered essentials.

It was a week or two after this that Renan dined with us, meeting amongst others M. Alfred Maury, with whom he fell into a long discussion about Italian affairs, admirably sustained by both disputants, who made little speeches at each other standing on either side of the fire. He talked, too, on that occasion a good deal about Gothic architecture and about the Song of Solomon, with which he was then occupied, and about which he expressed the opinions to which I shall presently have to refer.

On the 20th November I went to see him for the first time in his own house, which was then in the Rue Casimir Périer, along with Baron d'Eckstein the Sanscritist, who was an interesting person even to those whose studies were quite different from his, for he was very old, had an excellent memory, and his recollections extended a long way back. The conversation turned chiefly upon the sort of books which it was worth while to translate from German into French.

Renan considered, and very justly, that they should not be purely literary works, that what France needed was information, and that the history of the earliest antiquity, far better understood in Germany, would be one of the most useful subjects a translator could deal with.

On the 29th November he dined with us at a party made very memorable to me by its having been the first occasion on which I ever talked with Emile Ollivier about the Bonapartes, a subject on which I was destined to hear him speak in many successive years and in many phases of opinion. Renan talked much that evening about the Celtic race, about the life of St. Brendan and his wanderings, about the Irish having been in Iceland before the Northmen, and expressed the opinion that the name of the Antilles was an echo of the fabled Atlantis, and that Brazil was derived from Hybrasil, the land which the inhabitants of the Aran Isles and Western Ireland imagined they saw, far to the westward, under the setting sun.

These notes may give the reader an idea of some of the subjects to which his mind turned by preference at this period, when he was in society. I return to the products of his more serious hours.

In April 1860 he published a translation of

the Song of Solomon which was dedicated to the elder Bunsen, who was then approaching the close of his long, distinguished, and beneficent career. It is preceded by a careful study of this remarkable work, which has come down to us in a state so confused as to have made some scholars renounce the idea of finding any connection between its various parts, and fall back upon the conjecture that it is a mere collection of love songs. That is not Renan's opinion. He thinks that it is a dramatic poem very loosely and artlessly composed, but still a dramatic poem with a beginning, middle, and end, made up of five Acts with an Epilogue. The plot he conceives to be something of this sort. A young maiden of Sulem, a village belonging to the tribe of Issachar, has been carried off by the attendants of Solomon to his harem. She resists the advice of the other women and the prayers of the monarch, remaining faithful to her lover, who at length appears and takes her back to her home in Northern Palestine, where she laughs to scorn the precautions of her brothers, to whom her adventure was unknown, and counsels her lover to keep himself out of the way, till a convenient time for their union may arrive.

Renan believes, with Bossuet and many others, that this play, if it may be so called, was acted

with musical accompaniments and many variations at the marriage ceremonies of the Hebrews, and thinks that it is "the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride" alluded to in Jeremiah vii. 34. He finds a parallel to it, though an inferior parallel, in the *Jeu de Robin et Marion* which used to be played at Arras. As to its date he places it at about the middle of the tenth century B.C., and certainly the fourth verse of the sixth chapter almost proves that it belongs to that time. The heroine is compared to the capitals of Judah and Israel, to Jerusalem and Tirzah. Now Tirzah was a capital only from the days of Jeroboam to those of Omri, for about fifty years, say from B.C. 975 to B.C. 924. After that date it ceased to be a capital and is never mentioned. When Renan's essay appeared its very site was unknown, though in the last few years it has been recovered.

The drama too must have been written while the oppressions of Solomon were still fresh in the mind of the people, and before that very small potentate had been magnified by legend into a mighty prince. His guard, in this composition, consists of sixty men of valour, and his arsenal holds a thousand shields. That is probably a true statement of the facts, but compare it with the figures of the Book of Kings!

The idea that a mystical meaning lies hid in the Song of Songs belongs to a late date, a little before the time of Philo; but it was Origen who disseminated most widely the views which long prevailed in Christendom. The key to its meaning is to be found in the last verse of the fifth Act—the seventh verse of the eighth chapter in our version, "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love it would be utterly contemned." Renan, however, though bound as a scholar to give a true description of what the Song of Songs really was, by no means regretted that its drift had been completely mistaken by many generations, for, if this had not been the case, the world would have lost vastly more than it could have gained from a correct opinion having prevailed about the meaning of a Hebrew love-poem. He concludes his preface with the following words:—

"Ce n'est jamais sans crainte que l'on porte la main sur ces textes sacrés qui ont fondé ou soutenu les espérances de l'éternité, ni que l'on rectifie, au nom de la science critique, ces contre-sens séculaires qui ont consolé l'humanité, l'ont aidée à traverser tant d'arides déserts et lui ont fait conquérir des vérités fort supérieures à celle de la philologie. Il vaut mieux que l'humanité

ait espéré le Messie que bien entendu tel endroit d'Isaïe où elle a cru le voir annoncé ; il vaut mieux qu'elle ait cru à la résurrection que bien lu et bien compris tel passage obscur du *Livre de Job*, sur la foi duquel elle a affirmé sa délivrance future. Où en serions-nous si les contemporains du Christ et les fondateurs du Christianisme eussent été d'aussi bons philosophes que Gesenius? La foi à la résurrection et la foi au Messie ont fait faire plus de grandes choses que la science exacte du grammairien. Mais c'est la grandeur de l'esprit moderne de ne point sacrifier l'un à l'autre les besoins légitimes de la nature humaine ; nos espérances ne dépendent plus d'un texte bien ou mal entendu. Chacun, d'ailleurs, impose sa foi aux textes bien plus qu'il ne l'y puise. Ceux qui ont besoin de l'autorité de Job pour espérer en l'avenir ne croiront pas l'hébraïsant qui leur exposera ses doutes et ses objections ; sans s'inquiéter d'une variante, ils diront hardiment avec l'humanité *De terrâ surrecturus sum.* De même le *Cantique* cher à tant d'âmes pieuses subsistera malgré nos demonstrations. Comme une statue antique que la piété du moyen âge aurait habillée en Madone, il conservera ses respects, même quand l'archéologue aura prouvé son origine profane. Pour moi, mon but n'a pas été de soustraire à la vénération

l'image devenue sainte, mais de la dépouiller un moment de ses voiles pour la montrer aux amateurs de l'art antique dans sa chaste nudité."

Niebuhr was assuredly right when in reply to a silly young clergyman, who was troubled by the necessity of considering a love-song to be a Canonical book, he said, "For my part I should think that the Bible wanted something if it contained no expression of the deepest and strongest of human feelings."

In the May of 1860 the Emperor offered to send Renan to examine ancient sites in Phœnicia, under the protection of the French force which had occupied Syria after the Damascus and Lebanon massacres. The feud between the Government and the intellect of France was then so bitter that many persons of great merit would not have accepted even a scientific mission at its hands. Renan had no such scruple. Then, as before and afterwards to the end of his life, he was a Liberal; but he never thought that everything should be subordinated to politics, and it is quite undeniable that, during the last half of his reign, Napoleon III. did all he could to advance the interests of learning. He was encouraged and assisted in doing so by a person whose name was little known outside a comparatively small circle, but

who had great influence with him. This was Madame Cornu. She was the daughter of a lady who had been attached to the suite of Queen Hortense, and was brought up from childhood with Louis Napoleon, her junior by about a year. They remained intimate friends till the *Coup d'Etat*, when she, being a strong Liberal, broke off all relations with her playmate. As years went on, however, the old affection reasserted itself, and they once more became intimate. She could not, of course, do anything politically, to uphold a system of which she entirely disapproved, and which she criticised to me and to many others in the most outspoken manner; but she exerted herself to contribute at once to the glory of the Emperor and to the advantage of science by bringing him into relations with people to whom, powerful as he was, he had no other access. Renan paid a charming tribute to this most excellent woman in a book published near the end of his career, under the title of *Feuilles Détachées*, and some English readers must be familiar with her name from Senior's most interesting and far too little read *Journals*.

The history of the scientific results of the Phœnician expedition is recorded in a very large work consisting of a huge quarto of

nearly 900 pages and a folio of plates. Renan's personal adventures were told very briefly in the unpublished life of his sister Henriette. Of this beautiful little work only a hundred copies were printed, one of which is amongst my most cherished possessions. It had been intended that she should record what may be called the tourist side of their common experiences, which extended far beyond the boundaries of Phœnicia, and included a tour in Palestine; but unhappily, just as they were about to leave Syria, they were both attacked by one of the terrible fevers of the country. Renan became unconscious, and, when he recovered his senses, his sister was dead. As it happened, I never saw her, though I did see old Madame Renan, but she must have been a person of the most transcendent merit. She was many years older than her brother, watched over him as a child with intense affection, sacrificed all her deepest feelings to make enough to help her family and pay her father's debts, first by working in various schools in Paris, then, as I have already mentioned, by being a governess in Poland. Her experiences in Paris were sad, but in Poland she was far more fortunate, for she passed ten years in the family of Count André Zamoÿski, one of the most distinguished

men of his country. I never saw him but once, and then on a very melancholy occasion, when I went in Paris to bring him the latest news of his son, whom I had seen, a few days before, a prisoner in the citadel of Warsaw, in imminent danger of death.

Mademoiselle Renan began life as a Catholic of the Catholics, and remained such for many years. Gradually, however, her opinions changed, and when her brother confided to her his intention of leaving Saint-Sulpice, and his reasons for it, then, but only then, she told him, to his great surprise, that she had long ago come to think as he did. His Syrian journey produced the strongest possible effect upon Renan's mind. It was amongst the hills and valleys of Palestine that the idea of writing the life of Jesus grew up, and he made great progress with it before he left the country, more especially at the place which is mentioned in the memorable dedication to his sister prefixed to the most widely-known of all his books :—

"A l'Ame pure
de ma Sœur Henriette
Morte à Byblos le 24 Septembre 1861.

"Te souviens-tu, du sein de Dieu où tu reposes, de ces longues journées de Ghazir, où,

seul avec toi, j'écrivais ces pages inspirées par les lieux que nous avions visités ensemble? Silencieuse à côté de moi, tu relisais chaque feuille et la recopiais sitôt écrite, pendant que la mer, les villages, les ravins, les montagnes se déroulaient à nos pieds. Quand l'accablante lumière avait fait place à l'innombrable armée des étoiles, tes questions fines et délicates, tes doutes discrets, me ramenaient à l'objet sublime de nos communes pensées. Tu me dis un jour que, ce livre-ci, tu l'aimerais, d'abord parcequ'il avait été fait avec toi, et aussi parcequ'il était selon ton cœur. Si parfois tu craignais pour lui les étroits jugements de l'homme frivole, toujours tu fus persuadé que les âmes vraiment religieuses finiraient par s'y plaire. Au milieu de ces douces méditations, la mort nous frappa tous les deux de son aile; le sommeil de la fièvre nous prit à la même heure; je me réveillai seul! Tu dors maintenant dans la terre d'Adonis, près de la Sainte Byblos et des eaux sacrées où les femmes des mystères antiques venaient mêler leurs larmes. Révèle-moi, ô bon génie, à moi que tu aimais, ces vérités qui dominent la mort, empêchent de la craindre et la font presque aimer."

CHAPTER IV

Renan returned to France in the autumn of 1861, but his fever, which in its earlier stages seems to have been managed very strangely, remained long with him, and when I saw him in the month of February 1862 he was still suffering from it. Probably, indeed, it laid the foundation of the maladies to which he eventually succumbed, and which to any man who had not his burning desire to accomplish his work, coupled with an angelic temper, would have made his later years intolerable. It was on that occasion he first told me that he was going to write *Les Origines du Christianisme*, and that he had finished the first volume on the life of Christ. He was then living in the Rue de Madame.

Towards the end of the month of February 1862 an event took place which at the time was much talked of. The Chair of Semitic

Languages at the Collège de France having become vacant, the Emperor, much to his honour, accepting the joint recommendations of that institution and of the Académie des Inscriptions, appointed Renan to fill this high position. There was not the slightest doubt that he was more fitted to do so than any other Frenchman; but he was naturally enough an object of great dislike to those whose ranks he had quitted, and a number of people, who cared nothing for his or any other religious principles, thought that his inaugural lecture might be made use of for a demonstration of hostility to the Empire. There was nothing aggressive in the tone of his address: indeed he could not have been aggressive if he would. Aggression was not in him, but it would have been impossible for him to have avoided saying some things with which many of his hearers would strongly disagree.

Here is the passage which was, I think, most likely to raise or give a pretext for a storm:—

"Si le judaïsme n'eût été que le pharisaïsme, il n'aurait eu aucun avenir. Mais cette race portait en elle une activité religieuse vraiment extraordinaire. Comme toutes les grandes races, d'ailleurs, elle réunissait les contraires; elle savait réagir contre elle-même et avoir au

besoin les qualités les plus opposées à ses défauts. Au milieu de l'énorme fermentation où la nation juive se trouva plongée, sous les derniers Asmonéens, l'événement moral le plus extraordinaire dont l'histoire ait gardé le souvenir se passa en Galilée. Un homme incomparable, si grand que, bien qu'ici tout doive être jugé au point de vue de la science positive, je ne voudrais pas contredire ceux qui, frappés du caractère exceptionnel de son œuvre, l'appellent Dieu, opéra une réforme du judaïsme, réforme si profonde, si individuelle, que ce fut à vrai dire une création de toutes pièces. Parvenu au plus haut degré religieux que jamais homme avant lui eût atteint, arrivé à s'envisager avec Dieu dans les rapports d'un fils avec son père, voué à son œuvre avec un total oubli de tout le reste et une abnégation qui n'a jamais été si hautement pratiquée, victime enfin de son idée et divinisé par la mort, Jésus fonda la religion éternelle de l'humanité, la religion de l'esprit, dégagée de tout sacerdoce, de tout culte, de toute observance, accessible à toutes les races, supérieure à toutes les castes, absolue en un mot : Femme, le temps est venu où l'on n'adorera plus sur cette montagne ni à Jérusalem, mais où les vrais adorateurs adoreront en esprit et en vérité."

The speaker was continually interrupted, and a disturbance took place which, making a scandal all over Europe, advertised the name of its central figure far and wide. Soon after this affair Renan wrote to me as follows :—

"Paris, 10 *Mars* 1862.

". . . Pour moi, je ne me sens pas blessé. Je vais rouvrir dans quelques semaines ; le cours n'est donc pas menacé. D'un autre côté, l'espèce humaine est si sotte qu'il faut permettre à ceux qui le gouvernent de faire des concessions à sa sottise. Tout ce qu'on peut demander de mieux au gouvernement actuel est d'être inconséquent. La suspension a été prononcée sur les réclamations presque menaçantes des Cardinaux et après une démarche des plus pressantes, faite près de l'Impératrice par plusieurs évêques. La coïncidence des discussions du Sénat, du discours du Prince Napoléon, de l'Affaire de Rome et d'une certaine agitation dans la jeunesse a été d'un poids encore plus décisif. C'est à l'Empereur que je pardonne le plus volontiers. Sa position, entre les passions ardentes qui déchirent le pays, est des plus difficiles. Chaque acte dans la voie libérale lui retombe comme une faut. Il avait fait, en me nommant malgré des démarches actives du parti catholique, un acte

presque courageux. Comme il ne faisait d'ailleurs que confirmer les présentations que le Collège de France et l'Institut avaient faites de moi, c'était aussi certainement un acte libéral. Aucun autre gouvernement en France ne l'aurait fait. Si la concession en sens contraire qu'il vient de faire peut l'aider à amener une solution libérale de l'Affaire de Rome, je l'oublierai bien volontiers.

"Plus que jamais, du reste, au milieu de ces injustices et de ces inconstances de l'opinion j'y deviens insensible. En poursuivant cette chaire j'ai cru remplir un devoir.

"E. RENAN."

Any one who cares to pursue this subject further will find it very fully explained in a letter addressed by Renan to his colleagues at the Collège de France in July 1862, and republished six years later in his *Questions Contemporaines*. The sixth section of this letter, which bears the title "Qu'on n'est pas irréligieux pour essayer de séparer la religion du surnaturel," should be read by all who are interested in such discussions.

I saw Renan next in the middle of the month of April, when he talked, as was natural, rather sadly of the fund of superstition in the French

mind; but not a harsh word escaped his lips with reference to what had occurred. I remember, too, that on this occasion he gave me an amusing account of the horror of Buloz, the famous editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, when, about the age of fifty, he first read the Book of Kings.

I do not think we met again till the 3rd April 1863, but in the meantime he had been extremely serviceable to me in bringing me into connection with people in Holland whose acquaintance I desired to make, such as M. Réville, then pastor of the Walloon Church at Rotterdam, Professors Kuenen and Scholten, of Leyden, who are now, alas! dead, and Mr. Land, who, happily, is very much alive, and whom I re-met, with great satisfaction, at the Orientalist Congress last September.

It was on the 6th April that Renan took me to visit Sainte-Beuve, and I had the pleasure (at No. 11 Rue Mont Parnasse, surely the most appropriate of addresses) of seeing together the most literary of savants and the most savant of literary men.

At this time the *Vie de Jésus* was passing through the press, and Renan gave me a number of the proofs of it, which I still possess. From 1862 to nearly the end of 1881 the seven

volumes of the *Origines du Christianisme*, of which the *Vie de Jésus* was the first, formed the great occupation of his life. The first edition of the seventh and last volume bears the date of 1882, but my copy, coming from the author, reached me at Madras on 1st December 1881. I will reserve what I have to say about the *Origines du Christianisme* until I reach that year.

During the long space of time, however, in which the successive volumes were gradually appearing, their author did a great deal of other work, to some of which I will call attention before I attempt to deal with the great continuous history.

I divided most of the winter of 1863-64 between Paris and St. Petersburg, seeing, when I was in the former place, a great deal of Renan, and I may briefly refer to a few of our conversations. As early as November, he told me, when we sat looking over the Galliera gardens in his new house, 29 Rue de Vanneau, that when the eleventh edition of the *Vie de Jésus*, which was then being published, had been sold, there would be over 66,000 copies in circulation. There were already two Dutch and two German translations. The Italian one he thought very good. He told me, too, that the

Empress had refused to try to stop the publication of his book, and at a somewhat later date Madame Cornu mentioned to me that she had said, "It will do no harm to those who believe in Christ; and to those who do not, it will do good." Up to this time he remained firm in his opinions about the Gospel of St. John, for we chanced to converse upon that subject.

On the 2nd of December he dined with us, and talked much of Palestine, one of his topics being the great prosperity of Syria just before the Mahommedan Conquest. Christianity, he said, was really victorious under the Syrian Emperors. Most of the Syrians who then flooded Europe were Christians. Other subjects were Prince Napoleon, of whom he had seen a good deal since his return to Europe, and who had, he thought, *infiniment d'esprit*, as well as knowledge and power of thought. A day or two later he was again with us, in company with Maury, mentioned above. I forget which of the two it was, but I think Renan, who said that Eugène Burnouf had understood a verse of the Lithuanian Bible simply through his knowledge of Sanscrit. It was somewhere about this time that an English writer provoked the delighted laughter of Lord Strangford, by talking of "that mushroom nation, the Lithuanians!"

"Yes," he said, "that mushroom nation, which goes back to the most hoar Aryan antiquity. You might, with equal propriety, talk of those mushroom families—the Courtenays and the Derings!"

Soon after my return from Russia I had a long conversation with Renan, in the course of which he told me that he had known well old Madame Lebas, the daughter of Adrienne Lecouvreur, and that to the last she always spoke of Robespierre as *ce pauvre Maximilien*. We talked, too, about a lecture by Philarète Chasles, which I had just heard, and he gave me a very amusing account of the society in which that gentleman's father had chiefly lived. The elder Chasles was an old Montagnard, and kept up intimate relations with some others of the same way of thinking. Closely, however, as they held together, they disputed desperately, and each of them only too often, it is to be feared, regretted that he had not sent to the guillotine all the others when he had the chance. Renan mentioned the name of an eminent surgeon which has escaped my memory, who lived, in the abundance of peace, to near the time at which we were talking, though he had been one of the permanent jurymen of the Revolutionary Tribunal, and thought, to the

last, he had done quite right. Then the talk wandered away, as it often did, to Renan's Eastern journey. He spoke of the Cave of Machpelah, of the belief that the Patriarchs are actually living there, and of the Jews being allowed to approach in order to send missives to Abraham, but getting beaten by the guardians of the sacred spot for attempting to do so!

It was a few days after this that he took me to see Littré, who, when in Paris, where at that period of his life he lived but little, had a house in the Rue de l'Ouest. On our way my companion talked to me of Littré's father, whom he considered a type of the best of the men of the first Revolution. He described him in public, at a later period, when receiving M. Pasteur at the Academy. The elder Littré served in the artillery of the Republic, and held all his life most strongly to his Republican views, even when the profession of them was most dangerous. His principles in philosophy and religion were those of the eighteenth century; but fearing that the raillery of Voltaire had had too much to do with his convictions, he went through them carefully once again, in the most serious manner, after his marriage, and being persuaded that they were correct, pro-

ceeded to teach them to his son with a clear conscience.

Arrived at Littré's, we talked of many subjects—of John Stuart Mill, whom Littré knew, and of Miss Martineau, with whom he had corresponded. His great dictionary, at which he was then at work, would, he thought, take him about five years longer. He praised Strauss's *Dogmatik* as the best book which the Hegelian school had produced, and neither he nor Renan put Villemain quite as high as I myself, seduced by the charm of his conversation, was inclined to do. Renan, indeed, was most emphatic in placing Cousin, whom, as I have mentioned, he did not praise unreservedly, much above him. The name of Péreire, the great speculator, came up, and Littré said that he had known him thirty years before, when he was writing for the *National*, and was, as he expressed it, "*aussi gueux que moi.*" Politics claimed their share of the conversation. Both thought that the taking of Savoy had been a blunder, and that very few Frenchmen cared anything for the frontier of the Rhine. The Mexican expedition was very unpopular. Renan had found no dislike to England in the Syrian army, but said there was a great deal among the maritime population of the Breton coast. His

own father had been a prisoner in England. I was especially glad that I had seen Littré along with him when I read many years afterwards his extraordinarily interesting judgment on that very great and very good man in the answer to M. Pasteur, already alluded to.

Somewhat later in the same year Renan was deprived of his Chair at the Collège de France, and offered in exchange for it a position at the Bibliothèque Impériale of greater importance than the one which he held there when I first knew him. This he refused, and the whole correspondence about the incident, which was highly discreditable to the Minister of Public Instruction, can be found in *Questions Contemporaines*.

I saw him about a month after this event, in the middle of August, along with Henry Smith, the Savilian Professor of Geometry at Oxford, with whom I was about to make a tour in Spain, and whose death, ten years ago, is still lamented by so many friends. Oddly enough, just as we came into the little room at Sèvres, where Renan was passing the summer, he was reading Mr. Jowett's book on St. Paul's Epistles, and said that it would surely require the magnifying glass of a theologian to find any heresy in that work. He talked much of the second volume of the

Origines, afterwards published as *Les Apôtres*, and had been greatly struck on a recent reperusal of the Acts of the Apostles, which he thought underrated. He considered that the part in which the writer described what he had actually seen was *d'une netteté et d'une fermeté remarquable.* He spoke very highly of his friend Berthelot, who was living near him, of his fine intellect and large views. That led to talk of M. Regnault, whom I had visited at Sèvres some four or five years previously, and who, Henry Smith said, had done a very great deal for chemical science by his exact measurements, but had no general ideas. Renan talked, too, of his second visit to the East, which he had arranged for the late autumn of 1864, and recommended me to go to Syria in November, a piece of advice which, many years later, I took. He walked with us to the Ville d'Avray station, and said, on our way thither, that he was writing an account of Duns Scotus, adding that he thought the Germans would be more and more the Scots of the world in the sense of its teachers.

His *Apôtres* came out in 1866, and, soon after it reached me, I had a very interesting talk with him about the extraordinary story of the rise of Bâbism, of which he makes such excellent use in that book, and about which then and

for many years afterwards, till, indeed, quite recently, when Mr. Browne, the Lecturer in Persian at Cambridge, did so much to throw light upon that strange story, it was very difficult to get information. Renan told me that he had got some of his facts from Gobineau, but some also from a Persian official whom he had met at Constantinople, and under whose orders many of the horrors then enacted, in the reign, be it remembered, of the present Shah, actually took place.

The political situation in Paris changed very rapidly from 1866 onwards, and many believed that the Empire was going to become constitutional. It might possibly have done so if it had not been involved in war. During this period Renan thought for a time of engaging in active politics, and he issued, in the year 1869, a very sensible address to the electors of Meaux, which was reproduced in the *Times* just after his death. His candidature was not successful; but in the same year in which he came forward for the Corps Législatif, the third volume of the *Origines*, that on St. Paul, appeared. Both political and religious subjects were treated by him in his *Questions Contemporaines*, which saw the light, as a volume, in 1868. Some of the pieces which it contains had

been written years before, when he was quite a young man. Others, to which I have already referred, were much more recent.

A very large part of this book is devoted to questions connected with the Higher Education, and to its most important organ, the Collège de France. Three papers are given to three of its lights—Ramus, the enemy of the bastard Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages, who was murdered during the massacres of St. Bartholomew at the instance of Charpentier, a jealous colleague; Eugène Burnouf, the great Sanscritist already alluded to; and M. de Quatremère, who was Renan's immediate predecessor in the Chair of Semitic Languages, a man of much learning and distinguished ability of the lexicographical kind, the outcome of which was hardly so great as might have been expected.

Some of the other papers may still be read with much advantage, such as that on the Institut; others, like that on the Professorship of Sanscrit at the Collège de France, relate to transactions long forgotten, except, perhaps, by those who knew personally some of the actors in them. I should hardly make an exception in favour of that on the Philosophy of Contemporary History, although it is interesting to see what Renan thought of the Restoration and

the Monarchy of July. Even the long essay on the religious future of modern societies is far less important than it was, before the disappearance of the temporal power of the Pope altered so many things. The fourth and last part of it should, however, still be read. It is full of such passages as the following:—

"Quant au vrai Dieu de la conscience humaine, celui-là est inattaquable. Il a sa raison d'être dans une foi invincible et non dans des raisonnements plus ou moins ingénieux. . . . C'est dans le monde de l'idéal, et là seulement, que toutes les croyances de la religion naturelle ont leur légitimité. Or, je ne puis trop le répéter, c'est l'idéal qui est, et la réalité passagère qui paraît être. L'âme juste qui voit, à travers le cristal de ce monde, l'idée pure dégagée du temps et de l'espace, est la plus clairvoyante. Celui qui aura consacré sa vie au bien, au vrai, au beau, aura été le mieux avisé. Voilà le Dieu vivant, qui se sent et ne se démontre pas. Je n'ai pas besoin de miracles pour y croire; je n'ai besoin que d'écouter en silence l'impérative révélation de mon cœur.

"Aussi les hommes qui ont eu de Dieu un sentiment vraiment fécond n'ont-ils jamais posé ces questions d'une façon contradictoire. Ils n'ont été ni des déistes à la manière de l'école

française, ni des panthéistes. Ils ne se sont perdus dans ces questions subtiles où se fût usé leur génie. Ils ont senti Dieu puissamment, ils ont vécu en lui ; ils ne l'ont pas défini. Jésus brille dans cette phalange divine à un rang exceptionnel. En se reconnaissant fils de Dieu, en autorisant les hommes à appeler Dieu leur père, en renversant les superstitions des cultes antiques par sa belle théorie de la prière et de l'adoration spirituelle, en donnant l'exemple d'une vie toute consacrée aux œuvres de son Père, il a réalisé la plus haute conscience de Dieu qui ait probablement jamais existé dans l'humanité. Par là, les hommes vraiment religieux de tous les siècles seront ses disciples, même quand ils s'écarteront sur presque tous les points des doctrines que les Eglises issues de lui ont développées sous son nom."

In 1870 Renan was restored to his Chair at the Collège de France.

At the Easter of that year I took Sir John Lubbock to see him, and he said to us, "I am going to begin my Lectures as Luis de Leon did when he resumed his, after having been silenced for years by the Inquisition, with the words, 'As I was observing at our last meeting.'"

A month or two after this he started along with Prince Napoleon upon what ought to have

been a most delightful journey to the far North. The fates and the destinies were, however, not favourable, and the story of what happened will be best told in his own words :—

"SÈVRES, 19 *Août* 1870.

"MONSIEUR ET AMI—J'ai vivement regretté de ne pas m'être trouvé à Paris le jour où vous êtes venu m'apporter le nouvel opuscule de Max Müller. J'aurais tant aimé à causer avec vous des circonstances actuelles. J'ai présenté hier à l'Institut l'opuscule que vous m'avez remis de la part de notre ami. Vous pouvez lui faire savoir que son hommage a été accueilli comme il devait être ; j'ai été chargé expressement de lui transmettre les remerciements de la compagnie.

"Vous avez su peut-être qu'il y a six semaines, j'ai fait une petite tournée en Ecosse, à Aberdeen, à Inverness, à Banff, avec le Prince Napoléon. Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire que j'ai beaucoup songé à vous, et que nombre de fois je me suis informé si vous n'étiez pas dans ces parages. Le prince aussi désirait beaucoup vous connaître.

"Quel orage, cher ami, est survenu depuis! Quel accès d'aliénation mentale! Quel crime! Le plus grand serrement de cœur que j'aie ressenti de ma vie a été quand nous avons reçu à

Tromsöe le télégramme funeste qui nous apprenait que la guerre était certaine et qu'elle allait être immédiate. Je vous avoue que je regardais le danger de la guerre comme écarté pour des années, peut-être pour toujours. L'avenir de la France me paraissait triste, médiocre, mais je ne redoutais pas un tel cataclysme. Le Prince en partant n'avait pas une ombre d'appréhension. Comme à moi, ce qui est arrivé lui a fait l'effet d'un accès de subite folie.

"Quand pourrons-nous reprendre nos sérieuses études, nos pacifiques entretiens? Y aura-t-il encore une société française où l'on causera de tout ce qui fait l'honneur et l'ornement de la vie? On en doute parfois. Conservez moi au moins toujours votre amitié. Presentez mes hommages et les meilleurs compliments de ma femme à Madame Grant Duff.

"E. Renan."

About the same time that he wrote this letter to me he addressed another to Strauss, in reply to one from that eminent representative of German thought. Renan's letter and a paragraph of Strauss's are reprinted in the volume which the former published in 1875 called *La Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale*. It is a pity that the whole of Strauss's is not given, for I

remember having been much impressed by it, as well as by one written by him a few weeks later, when they first appeared. Renan had the fullest right to take the line he did, because if any man tried his utmost to bring about good relations between France and Germany, he did so through his whole literary career, from 1845 to the beginning of the war. His political action on the French side was as wise in all that related to Germany as was that of the school which had for its most august representatives beyond the Rhine the late Emperor Frederick, then the Crown Prince, and his immediate *entourage*. Unhappily not one Frenchman in a thousand shared Renan's views. The Emperor did; but then the Emperor was not a Frenchman, either by race or by training. The victory in France remained with the *tigre-singe* element, represented by the showy, but worthless, military men who surrounded the Empress, and by the Parisian journalists. The victory in Germany remained with Prince Bismarck, who has so well incarnated through all his career the worst, but, unfortunately, not the weakest elements in the German character. The fact of Renan's views about Germany having been those of an enlightened but, alas! only fractional minority in France, diminished the force of his reasoning

when he attempted to urge moderation upon the conqueror. The worst done by the Germans in France, though bad enough, was child's play compared to what the French would have done in Germany if they had succeeded in crossing the Rhine before the end of those fateful eleven days, as to which Moltke said, "If they cross it before these are over we shall have a great deal of trouble; if they do not, they will never see it again."

The latter half of Renan's second letter, dated about a year later, on the 18th of September 1871, and republished in the volume above-mentioned, is full of insight as to the *rapprochements* which were likely to be brought about by the events of that year between France and Russia, and as to the ever-growing and deepening hatred of the Slav for the Teuton. "Within fifty years," he writes to Strauss, "the Slavs will have found out that it was you and yours who made their national title mean slave." That is a prophecy which is rapidly fulfilling itself, and will yet impose tremendous sacrifices upon Germany and her allies.

How Renan thought in the earlier days of the war can be more fully seen in an article published in the middle of September 1870 in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and reprinted, like his letters,

in 1875 in the *Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale.* In the same volume will be found, amongst other papers, a very long and able one, the fruit of his reflections during the invasion, about the faults which had brought France into her perplexities, and the remedies which might best tend to extricate her from them.

Of political conversations with him in those years, the one I remember best took place in the spring of 1874, when he said that it seemed not improbable that the Empire might come back "without the best thing in it—the Emperor."

It was, however, of other subjects that he most willingly talked.

Early in 1873 he was full of his recent journey to Italy. He had been investigating, amongst other things, the site of Nero's fire, and had come to the conclusion that it was a measure of *Expropriation à cause d'utilité publique.* But why should an absolute ruler find it necessary to burn down houses, which he wished to get rid of, for the purpose of improving his capital? "Because," answered Renan, "the portion of the city he wanted to clear away contained a great number of shrines, which were regarded with so strong a religious reverence

that not even the Emperor could venture to set it at nought."

I did not see him on my way through Paris to India in the autumn of 1874, but was more fortunate in the spring of the following year, when he had many questions to put about the East. I recollect his telling me that he was persuaded that Ophir was on the west coast of India, and not, as many thought, in Africa.

In the year 1875 Renan accepted an invitation to attend the Congress, which was held at Palermo in the month of September, and he gave, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, under the title of *Twenty Days in Sicily*, an account of his experiences. It is a singularly graceful chapter of travel, and was wisely reproduced, three years afterwards, in his *Mélanges*. He was struck, as he approached Palermo, by the unfamiliar aspect of the country. The mountains he saw were not those of Syria, nor of Greece, but carried the mind to Africa. As he drew near the harbour the gardens of the "Shell of Gold" recalled to him the Plain of Damascus. To my thinking the Western Paradise is a good deal the more beautiful of the two. His observations on that wonderful Norman dynasty and all that was produced under its protection, the Cathedral of Monreale, the Capella Palatina, and so much else, are very

attractive, and the pages are sown with just and subtle remarks. Take this one upon "Restoration" as a specimen :—

"There is only one way of being quite sure that you will not be treated as a Vandal ; that is to destroy nothing, to leave the monuments of the past just as they are."

Or again :—

"If we wish to see the life of Greece prolonging itself to our own days, it is to Sicily and to the Bay of Naples that we must go. Greece, properly so-called, has been too much depopulated ; there have been on its soil too many changes of race."

The sketches of Segesta and Selinus bring back very clearly those two historic foes, now equally the prey of desolation. Many a traveller, when looking upon the ruins of the latter city, has asked the same question as Renan, "Ah! why did these demi-gods think it their duty to devour one another?"

Nothing in the island seems to have given him more pleasure than the row up the Anapus to the fountain of Cyane; and he says, I am glad to record, a good word for the papyrus, proposing that a plant which has been of so great service to the human race should, if it is in danger of disappearing, and twenty years ago

it had disappeared from Egypt, be pensioned by mankind at large, in the Valley of the Anapus. Happily it has no intention of disappearing; it is still abundant in various parts of Palestine.

From Syracuse Renan proceeded to Messina, whence he passed to Ischia and Casamicciola, undisturbed by the fear of earthquakes, which subsequent events proved, alas! to be no visionary fear. There he recovered from the fatigues of his Sicilian expedition, which must have been very great, for it was a round of festivals, banquets, receptions, and archæology pursued by night as well as by day.

It was in the spring of 1876 that he told me the story which, eight years later, he told, not quite so well, in the Preface to his *Nouvelles Etudes Religieuses*, the story of the Capuchin who said to a friend of his, "Il a fait de fort mauvaises choses votre ami Monsieur Renan—de fort mauvaises choses; mais il a parlé très-bien de St. François et St. François arrangera tout ça!" In the Preface he makes the Capuchin say, "Il a écrit sur Jésus autrement qu'on ne le doit; mais il a bien parlé de St. François. St. François le sauvera." I think the Capuchin was more likely to have made the first than the second of these remarks; but assuredly Renan

deserved well at the hands of St. Francis—as well as any one who has lived in our times, as well as Professor Hase of Halle, or Señor Castelar. Any one who has read the charming little *Life of St. Francis* by the first, or the hundred eloquent pages in the *Recuerdos de Italia* of the second, will know that I am using a strong expression.

In the course of this same year he published his *Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques.* The Dialogues were written at Versailles while Paris was in the occupation of the Commune. His personages are abstractions clothed with names, under none of which must we seek either himself or any philosopher of past or present times. To put it in another way, the conversations here recorded were carried on between two portions of his own brain, and it must not be inferred that any one of the arguments or affirmations put forward was, at any time, the argument or affirmation of the whole of his brain. For some of my readers these dialogues will have as much interest as any portion of his writings; but for myself I confess that I prefer those in which he keeps amongst the historical sciences, the true field, as I think, of his fame. If one must venture into the region which lies beyond that easily

accessible to the student of the historical and physical sciences, I had rather accompany him when he is dreaming, or conjecturing, or speculating with his whole brain than with half of it. That is his attitude in his deeply-interesting letter addressed in the August of 1863 from Dinard to M. Berthelot, which is republished in this volume along with the equally interesting reply of that eminent man.

Next to that comes the reprint of a letter addressed two years later by Renan to M. Guéroult of the *Opinion Nationale*, the whole of which I should like to quote as being an admirable statement of my friend's views on a subject as to which he has often been misunderstood. As that is impossible I must content myself with a small portion of it :—

"Toute affirmation dogmatique renfermée dans une phrase finie est sujette à l'objection, et cependant, le jour où l'humanité cesserait d'affirmer, elle cesserait d'être. Toute forme religieuse est imparfaite, et pourtant la religion ne peut exister sans forme. La religion n'est vraie qu'à sa quintessence, et pourtant la trop subtiliser, c'est la détruire. Le philosophe qui, frappé du préjugé, de l'abus, de l'erreur contenue dans la forme, croit posséder la vérité en se réfugiant dans l'abstraction, substitue à la

réalité quelque chose qui n'a jamais existé. Le sage est celui qui voit à la fois que tout est image, préjugé, symbole, et que l'image, le préjugé, le symbole sont nécessaires, utiles et vrais."

And again :—

"Le principe religieux et nullement dogmatique proclamé par Jésus se développera éternellement avec une flexibilité infinie, amenant des symboles de plus en plus élevés, et en tout cas, créant pour les divers étages de la culture humaine des formes de culte appropriées à la capacité de chacun."

In the February of 1877 he went to the Hague to be present at the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the death of Spinoza, a man who had much in common with himself, not only in his opinions, but in his extraordinary goodness and amiability.

The address which he delivered on that occasion was republished in 1884 in his *Nouvelles Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse.* The following sentences are an excellent photograph of the practical philosophy of the Dutch sage of 1677, and the Breton sage of 1877 :—

"C'est la superstition, disait-il, qui érige en bien la tristesse et en mal tout ce qui procure la joie. Dieu serait un envieux s'il se réjouissait

de mon impuissance et du mal que je souffre. A mesure, en effet, que nous éprouvons une joie plus grande, nous passons à une plus grande perfection, et nous participons davantage de la nature divine. . . . La joie ne peut donc jamais être mauvaise, tant qu'elle est réglée par la loi de notre utilité véritable. La vie vertueuse n'est pas une vie triste et sombre, une vie de privations et d'austérités. Comment la divinité prendrait-elle plaisir au spectacle de ma faiblesse, m'imputerait-elle à bien des larmes, des sanglots, des terreurs, signes d'une âme impuissante? Oui, ajoutait-il avec force, il est d'un homme sage d'user des choses de la vie et d'en jouir autant que possible, de se réparer par une nourriture modérée et agréable, de charmer ses sens par le parfum et l'éclat verdoyant des plantes, d'orner même son vêtement, de jouir de la musique, des jeux, des spectacles et de tous les divertissements que chacun peut se donner sans dommages pour sa personne. On parle sans cesse du repentir, de l'humilité, de la mort; mais le repentir n'est point une vertu, c'est la conséquence d'une faiblesse; l'humilité ne l'est pas d'avantage, puisqu'elle naît pour l'homme de l'idée de son infériorité. Quant à la pensée de la mort, elle est fille de la crainte, et c'est dans les âmes faibles qu'elle élit son domicile. La

chose du monde, disait-il, à laquelle un homme libre pense le moins, c'est la mort. La sagesse est une méditation, non pas de la mort, mais de la vie."

I do not know whether it was on this occasion that Renan first made the acquaintance of the gifted Queen who then formed the centre of so much that was good and beautiful. In a paper published in the last volume which he gave to the world before he died, only last year, he has put it on record that she quoted, on the evening of the Spinoza celebration, when her health was already giving way, the last words of the passage I have just cited.

It was in connection with the Spinoza celebration that he came into relations with Sir Frederick Pollock, who wrote so interesting an article about him in the *Nineteenth Century* immediately after his death, and who was, so far as I am aware, the only Englishman who was present at his funeral and that of Lord Tennyson.

I was next to see him on the 24th March 1877, on the upper floor of the Hôtel of the Prince of Monaco.

This was the first time that Renan's health made me at all uneasy; he was suffering cruelly from rheumatism and unable to walk without

assistance. Readers of his Sicilian article, already mentioned, may recollect that in the Preface to it he said, writing on the 20th September 1875, that then "for the first time, he had begun to think that he was getting old"; and certainly when I look back to the condition he was in, at the time I am speaking of, it is a matter of great congratulation that he lived, and was fit for the most difficult work, more than sixteen years. He told me then that he was correcting the proofs of the fifth, and was far on with the sixth, volume of his *Origines*, adding that when that book was done he hoped to write, in three volumes, the history of the Jews. He was very happy, too, to find that his address, delivered at the Hague during the commemoration of Spinoza, had been much appreciated by persons whom he respected. I remember, too, that on this occasion he talked to me much about Dupanloup and Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet in the tone in which, as we have already seen, he wrote about them some years later.

I saw him again just three days after the famous *Seize Mai*. He much condemned the action of the Government, as tending to throw France quite unnecessarily into new adventures. At the same time he did not feel at all sure that the Republicans were not over confident in being

persuaded that France would support them. Universal suffrage, he said, is a creature little understood, which may easily play either party a very unexpected trick.

From him, I may mention, I went to Gambetta, whom I found perfectly calm. He said there would not be a vestige of disturbance; but that he and his friends would play out the political game against the Marshal as quietly as if it were a "*parti de whist.*" And they did!

I saw Renan in the autumn of 1877 and in the spring of 1878, but have no very definite recollection of what passed, except that on the first of these occasions he expressed a great wish to go and explore Pantellaria, interesting to him from its connection with Phœnicia. That island is now an Italian convict station, which it was indeed as far back as the days of the Cæsars; but in old times, under the name of Cossyra, it was a flourishing Republic, allied with Carthage against Rome.

In the year 1878 appeared a collection to which Renan or his publisher gave the name of *Mélanges d'Histoire et de Voyages.* It contains a great number of papers, including the famous address of 1862, which caused such a tempest, the narrative of his tour in Sicily, to which I have called attention, and a number of very

early efforts—a paper upon public instruction in China, dating even so far back as 1847. I will notice only one or two of these collected essays.

A very elaborate account of Joseph Victor LeClerc, who, when his life was more than half over, transferred himself from the study of the Classics to that of the Middle Ages, and who became one of the greatest authorities upon their literary history, records the story of a typical scholar—of a man whom we should expect to find rather at Halle or Heidelberg than in the Paris of the nineteenth century. Renan was closely connected with him, not only from their being colleagues in the Académie des Inscriptions, but also from the fact that he co-operated with LeClerc in his *Histoire Littéraire de la France au 14ième Siècle*, and certainly the younger man has done full justice to his senior.

In connection with this paper may be read a long and careful essay upon the Art of the Middle Ages, republished in the same volume. This was a subject on which Renan sometimes talked to me, and I remember his sketching a plan of a journey we were to make together, in the district lying to the north of Paris, where, as he believed, I suppose correctly,

that the style which we know by the absurd name of Gothic — but which had as much to do with the Goths as with the North American Indians — really grew up. This journey, alas! was never made; but his ideas on the subject of the succession of the styles of French architecture are explained with admirable clearness in these pages. He believed that Oriental influences had nothing whatever to do with the change from the round to the pointed arch. The pointed architecture of France was, he considered, a legitimate and logical development from the Romanic style which, in the eleventh century and in the beginning of the twelfth, prevailed so largely in that country. The Mahommedan architecture, which so often in the East reminds one of the Gothic, was an equally legitimate development from the Byzantine.[1]

The review of M. Beulé's book on the Cæsars is full of suggestive remarks upon Augustus, his system of government, and his successors. It contains few affirmations, but many discreet questions, and could hardly fail to be useful to any one who was studying the

[1] When I visited the great Mosque, close to the Kootub, in the neighbourhood of Delhi, I was struck, as I walked towards it, with its resemblance to Tintern, when my travelling companion came up and said, "Dear me, how like Fountains!"

standard authorities on the first century, if only by reminding him that there are two sides to most questions, and that, with reference to Tiberius and those who followed him, posterity, at least till very lately, heard only one side.

An Address read to the Académie des Inscriptions on some points of the story of the Empress Faustina, the wife of Marcus Aurelius, is full of good sense. It is not one of those thorough-going attempts at rehabilitation which excite almost as much distrust in the mind of the sober reader as do the tirades against eminent names of the past which are merely indictments in the disguise of history. Renan thinks that Faustina was probably rather a foolish woman, but that there is no proof whatever of the serious allegations which have been made against her, while to counteract these we have the testimony of her husband that she had made him very happy,[1] given in that ever-memorable meditation, or confession, or profession, which he wrote down "amongst the Quadi by the Granua."

Renan became a member of the French Academy in 1879, and delivered his *Discours* there on 3rd April. He succeeded to the

[1] "That I have such a wife, so obedient and so affectionate, and so simple."

fauteuil left vacant by M. Claude Bernard, a most eminent physiologist, but not exactly the sort of person on whom one would have cared to hear him discourse. Still the paper is full of remarkable things; here, for instance, is a very characteristic passage:—

"La plus grande faute que puissent commettre la philosophie et la religion est de faire dépendre leurs vérités de telle ou telle théorie scientifique et historique; car les théories passent et les vérités nécessaires doivent rester. L'objet de la religion n'est pas de nous donner des leçons de physiologie, de géologie, de chronologie; qu'elle n'affirme rien en ces matières, et elle ne sera pas blessée. Qu'elle n'attache pas son sort à ce qui peut périr. La réalité dépasse toujours les idées qu'on s'en fait; toutes nos imaginations sont basses auprès de ce qui est. De même que la science, en détruisant un monde matériel enfantin, nous a rendu un monde mille fois plus beau, de même la disparition de quelques rêves ne fera que donner au monde idéal plus de sublimité. Pour moi, j'ai une confiance invincible en la bonté de la pensée qui a fait l'univers. 'Enfants! disons-nous des hommes antiques, enfants! qui n'avaient point d'yeux pour voir ce que nous voyons!'—'Enfants! dira de nous l'avenir, qui pleuraient

sur la ruine d'un millenium chimérique et ne voyaient pas le soleil de la vérité nouvelle blanchir derrière eux les sommets de l'horizon."

The five Academies which form the Institut have been since 1848 the most really venerable things left by the tide of revolution in French society. It is pleasant to see, from an Address delivered by Renan in July 1871 to the Académie des Inscriptions, and printed in the *Mélanges*, that that august body did not omit one of its weekly meetings during either the long and dreary siege or the hideous follies of the Commune.

In the spring of 1880 Renan came to London to deliver those Hibbert Lectures which many heard and many more have since read. Of course they were entirely of a popular character, and did not, I think, contain anything that is not to be found more fully stated in the *Origines du Christianisme.* The moment chosen was an unlucky one, for a good many people who would have liked "to have sat under him" were far away. I was myself in the North of Scotland looking after my election, and many of my friends were in a similar plight. I got back just in time to hear the last and to admire the extraordinary perfection of the lecturer's enunciation. Everyone in the room who knew French must have

heard every word. He came to stay with us at Twickenham, and a house which, from the days of Lord Chancellor Clarendon downwards, has welcomed so many illustrious guests, has seldom, I think, opened its doors to a better man. I asked the Breakfast Club to meet him, but the disturbance caused by the great political contest still kept people away from London, and that body was represented only by Sir T. Erskine May, Lord Arthur Russell, and myself.

I did not see Renan again for about a year, but I was in Paris in the April of 1881, when he was living in the Rue Tournon. On the 20th I had a conversation with a common friend, in which he spoke much of the disappearance from France of literary and political talent, not of science and industry. I went on to Renan, who spoke rather, though not much, more hopefully of the state of French literature. Little did I know at this time that I should not be again in Paris for nearly six years; but I reflected that Victor Hugo was getting very old, and that I had never seen him, so I asked Renan to take me to "the presence." This he did on the 21st. The poet lived at Passy, and when we arrived at his house, pretty late in the evening, we found him surrounded by his court, for court it was. After some conversation he said to me, "Well, as is

our custom in France, we have attacked in front; we have attacked Catholicism, and in so doing we have attacked Christianity. The result will be that ere long there will be an end of that religion!" I was naturally a little startled, but bowed and asked "What would replace it?" To this Victor Hugo replied, "*Ces trois mots—Dieu, Ame, Responsabilité!*" At this moment one of the ladies of his household came up and told him that he had talked enough, which indeed he had, for he had a slight attack of bronchitis, and I did not again speak to him till I went up to take my leave, when he said, "Adieu, do not forget what has passed between us."

CHAPTER V

VERY soon after this conversation I was appointed to the Governorship of Madras, and it was, as I have already stated, just after my arrival there that I received the last volume of the *Origines du Christianisme*. This then may be the fitting place to say a little about that work, for upon its seven volumes and on the five which lead up to it, three of which were published and the two others practically finished before Renan died, will rest the main edifice of his fame. The numerous other works which I have noticed, and some others which I have still to notice, important as nearly all of them are, seem to me, so to speak, only *dépendances* of the huge central building.

Of the first volume, that is of the *Vie de Jésus*, I need say little. Every one has read it who takes any interest in the religious thought of our time, save persons who, being persuaded that

they would receive no good and much pain from it, have very wisely determined not to do so. Most of these probably imagine that it is quite a different book from what it is; but that is a matter of small importance either to them or to any one else. Those who have done me the honour to follow me thus far will have understood Renan's point of view, will have seen that he drew a very wide distinction between the Christ of history and the Christ which the Catholic Church in its widest signification, the Church, that is, before the division of East and West, made its ideal. I last re-read the book in Palestine at a point which Jesus is not known to have visited, but which, from the top of the hill on the slope of which Nazareth was built, he must have seen thousands of times. And certainly no one, however much opposed to the general views of its author, could deny to him an extraordinary power of describing the scenes and circumstances amidst which the most wonderful and fateful of human lives was led. It has the fault which is common to all other works of the same kind, orthodox or heterodox, that the subjective element is too great in proportion to the objective. The facts we know about the life of Jesus are, after all, extremely few, and no one can possibly write the sort of

book, which so many have tried to write about him, without evolving from his own imagination far more matter than should ever find place in a biography.

It will have been seen, from what I have mentioned above, that as late as the time at which he was bringing out his eleventh edition, Renan held to his views about the Fourth Gospel, assigning to it an earlier date and more historical importance than did many of his critics. In the interval between that period and the preparation of his thirteenth edition he materially changed those views, without however accepting the extreme conclusions of Tübingen, and prefixed to it a very long Preface to show why he had done so, continuing the subject in a still longer Appendix. His opponents have a perfect right to say that the fact of his having altered his opinion about a matter of such moment to all who write on the life of Jesus, as the amount of authority to be assigned to the Fourth Gospel, shows that he began to write before his ideas were as mature as they should have been. This they have a right to say; but surely they must in fairness admit that no stronger proof of *bona fides* could have been given by an author than to admit that he had been wrong on such a point. And it must be remembered that the criticism

to which he had been subjected from the orthodox side had been not only of a loyal, legitimate, and learned kind, but that he had been abused as an enemy of God and man. Yet how did he meet this storm?

I take the following passage from the Preface to the thirteenth edition :—

"Pour me disculper en détail de toutes les accusations dont j'ai été l'objet, il m'eût fallu tripler ou quadrupler mon volume ; il m'eût fallu répéter des choses qui ont déjà été bien dites même en français ; il eût fallu faire de la polémique religieuse, ce que je m'interdis absolument ; il eût fallu parler de moi, ce que je ne fais jamais. J'écris pour proposer mes idées à ceux qui cherchent la vérité. Quant aux personnes qui ont besoin, dans l'intérêt de leur croyance, que je sois un ignorant, un esprit faux ou un homme de mauvaise foi, je n'ai pas la prétention de modifier leur avis. Si cette opinion est nécessaire au repos de quelques personnes pieuses, je me ferais un véritable scrupule de les désabuser."

I should doubt whether the subject of his biographical labours would have had any fault to find with such a method of treating adversaries, and it was Renan's habitual method in private as in public. Writing to me, for example,

from Jersey on the 30th August 1863, he said:—

"Parfois, je vous l'avoue, en voyant les colères que mon livre suscite parmi toutes les orthodoxies, je me repens presque de l'avoir publié. Je ne croyais pas à tant de passion et de parti pris. Enfin je l'ai fait avec une sincérité absolue."

Amongst the many explosions of wrath which greeted the publication of the *Vie de Jésus* I remember a story being repeated at the time, which amused me much. It was said, I know not whether truly or falsely, that the clergy of Genoa, anxious to deprecate the anger of Heaven, had proclaimed a *Tríduo.* The peasantry from all the country round flocked into the city, for they said, "It is the Tríduo of S. Renan"! There really, by the way, was a S. Renan of whom his distinguished namesake gives an edifying account in the *Souvenirs.* He was an old gentleman, very powerful, but very irascible, and when he died his neighbours were sorely puzzled what to do about his funeral. If they made a mistake it might go badly with them, for he was not given to stick at trifles. They assembled accordingly and held a consultation, when some *vir pietate gravis* had the happy idea of proposing that the bier should be put on an ox-cart and that the oxen should be allowed

to go where they pleased. This was done; they betook themselves to the middle of a forest, and there the Saint was buried, never to trouble any more his admiring but timid devotees.

Out of fifty people who have read the *Vie de Jésus* probably only one or two have gone on to *Les Apôtres*. It will be reasonable accordingly for me to speak at greater length about that work.

It begins with a long Introduction, much of which is, as was inevitable, devoted to explaining what is the proper use to be made of the Acts of the Apostles, and to showing that it was an Eirenicon, an attempt to reconcile the opposite and hostile schools of St. James, known as the Lord's brother, and of St. Paul. Some critics have treated the Acts as a document of the most absolute authenticity; others have considered the earlier portion of it as little better than a romance. The truth, according to Renan, lies between these two extremes. Its statements must be checked by other documents of more authority, such as the Epistle to the Galatians. The miraculous narratives must be treated as on a par with all other miraculous narratives ancient or modern; but when all reasonable deductions from the value of the book have been made, it remains, even in its earlier portions, a very

precious guide. These views are so widely held now that many will hardly care to hear them reiterated. To such I recommend that they should pass over the greater part of the Introduction and read only the last half-dozen pages, which are pre-eminently characteristic. I quote the conclusion :—

"Jouissons de la liberté des fils de Dieu ; mais prenons garde d'être complices de la diminution de vertu qui menacerait nos sociétés, si le Christianisme venait à s'affaiblir. Que serions-nous sans lui? Qui remplacera ces grandes écoles de sérieux et de respect telles que Saint-Sulpice, ce ministère de dévouement des Filles de la Charité? Comment n'être pas effrayé de la sécheresse de cœur et de la petitesse qui envahissent le monde? Notre dissidence avec les personnes qui croient aux religions positives est, après tout, uniquement scientifique ; par le cœur nous sommes avec elles ; nous n'avons qu'un ennemi, et c'est aussi le leur, je veux dire le matérialisme vulgaire, la bassesse de l'homme intéressé.

"Paix donc, au nom de Dieu! Que les divers ordres de l'humanité vivent côte à côte, non en faussant leur génie propre pour se faire des concessions réciproques, qui les amoindriraient, mais en se supportant mutuellement. Rien ne

doit régner ici-bas à l'exclusion de son contraire ; aucune force ne doit pouvoir supprimer les autres. L'harmonie de l'humanité résulte de la libre émission des notes les plus discordantes. Que l'orthodoxie réussisse à tuer la science, nous savons ce qui arrivera ; le monde musulman et l'Espagne meurent pour avoir trop consciencieusement accompli cette tâche. Que le rationalisme veuille gouverner le monde sans égard pour les besoins religieux de l'âme, l'expérience de la Révolution française est là pour nous apprendre les conséquences d'une telle faute. L'instinct de l'art, porté aux plus grandes délicatesses, mais sans honnêteté, fit de l'Italie de la renaissance un coupe-gorge, un mauvais lieu. L'ennui, la sottise, la médiocrité sont la punition de certains pays protestants où, sous prétexte de bon sens et d'esprit chrétien, on a supprimé l'art et réduit la science à quelque chose de mesquin. Lucrèce et Sainte Thérèse, Aristophane et Socrate, Voltaire et François d'Assise, Raphaël et Vincent de Paul ont également raison d'être, et l'humanité serait moindre si un seul des éléments qui la composent lui manquait."

At the very commencement of the second volume, Renan has to deal with the extremely perplexing subjects of the Resurrection and the

Ascension. Whether he has succeeded in doing so satisfactorily is a question which every one of his readers must answer for himself; but at least it may fairly be said that his account of the course which events took immediately after the Crucifixion is, if not *the* explanation, at least *an* explanation. It seems by no means improbable that things passed more or less in the manner he describes. He would not himself, I imagine, have claimed more for his narrative than this; but, considering the very small amount of information which has come down to us, and the contradictory character of some of the statements, it seems very doubtful whether persons who do not desire to prove anything either for or against a system of belief, but simply to form an idea in their own minds of the first weeks of Christianity, are ever likely to get much nearer the facts. As to one thing I think there can be no doubt, Renan is certainly right in calling attention to the vast importance of the part played by Mary Magdalene immediately after the entombment. Her influence at that moment was clearly decisive, and it is very creditable to the Middle Ages that they divined something of this and gave her, if not the place she deserved, at least a very prominent place in Christian Art.

When we pass beyond the brief period of marvel and mystery, in which the Christian Church returned for a moment to its Galilean birthplace only to say farewell, and find ourselves once again at Jerusalem, our surroundings become of a more historical character, although the weavers of legend have still been busy with the few facts which have been preserved. The inspired teacher of Galilee has disappeared:—

"Maintenant, tout parfum de lui est perdu. Enlevé sur son nuage à la droite de son Père, il nous laisse avec des hommes et que la chute est lourde ô ciel! Le règne de la poésie est passé. Marie de Magdala, retirée dans sa bourgade, y ensevelit ses souvenirs. Par suite de cette éternelle injustice qui fait que l'homme s'approprie à lui seul l'œuvre dans laquelle la femme a eu autant de part que lui, Céphas l'éclipse et la fait oublier."

The disposition of mind, however, which his teaching had produced lived on in the little Galilean colony at Jerusalem, and produced effects—some strange enough, like the phenomena of speaking with tongues and other similar products of ill-regulated enthusiasm, often to be reproduced; others fruitful in the highest degree, like the institution of the Order of Deacons and the importance into which widows, up to this

moment an oppressed class in Palestine, were suddenly elevated. In the joint family life of the community described in the earlier chapters of the Acts and in the change in the position of widows we have the germ of two institutions which produced for many ages great blessings to the world—the monastery and the convent. The cenobitic life was the first Christian life; but it stands to reason that such a life could only be led in small communities. If Christianity was to conquer the world it had to become something very different from what it was in its earliest days; but its impulse has always been to return to its first ideas, and hence the orders, congregations, and confraternities innumerable, wise, foolish, sublime, and grotesque, which we have seen, do see, and will see for long ages to come. The ideal of the first Christians was a monastic life, passed not in a monastery more or less in the nature of a prison in which the two sexes were separated, but in a sort of *Hortus inclusus* in the midst of the world, in which, freed from all care of the scaffolding of life, the soul could give itself up to the things of the soul—to a sort of golden dream. The recollections of Jesus connected themselves from the very first with the common repasts. The bread grew gradually and not slowly into a symbol of

Jesus, conceived as the only source of strength for those who had loved him and still lived with his life. We see from the character of the Hymns which St. Luke introduces that the Psalms, which may be thought of pretty correctly as the *Hymns Ancient and Modern* of the Second Temple, had great influence on the early Christian community. It cared, on the other hand, very little for the Law and all the institutions which the Judaism of the time erroneously connected with Moses. These it left to the Pharisees, from among whom was gradually developed the Talmudic school which, by a strange caprice of fortune, was to take possession of Galilee and make Tiberias its centre. The new opinions propagated themselves chiefly by conversation. Any one can see that the speeches reported in the earlier portion of the Acts would have had no effect upon an audience, and that, like other reports of ancient speeches, they merely represent more or less what the historian thought the speaker would have said. Gradually the circle of converts increased. Several very important additions were made from among the Cypriote Jews, more especially Joseph the Levite who was named, apparently from his eloquence, Barnabas, that is, the child of prophecy, in the sense of preaching.

The accession of Greek-speaking converts was of vast importance. Syro-Chaldaic, the language of Christ and the Apostles, was restricted to a very small district, while Greek was spoken all round the Eastern Mediterranean. The whole of the seventh chapter of *Les Apôtres* should be read with the greatest care, and not least the exceedingly curious pages from 131 to 133. Renan had lived in spirit so much with the prophets of Israel and with the Christians of the first days that he had caught a good deal of their communistic enthusiasm, and I am surprised that these two pages have not been oftener quoted by friends and foes. The account of the stoning of Stephen leads their author to point out that, just before that event, Pilate had been suspended from his functions, or was about to be suspended, on account of the too great firmness he had shown in suppressing the murderous fanaticism of the Jews—a firmness which, unhappily for his fame, was overborne on the one occasion of incomparable importance on which he had to choose between resistance and compliance. He was removed by the authority of Lucius Vitellius, the Imperial Legate of Syria, and father of the man who became Emperor for a moment. Vitellius also deposed Caïaphas soon

afterwards, wishing perhaps to hold the balance even, according to his lights; but the power remained on in the family of Annas and Caïaphas for some years after this. There is much truth in the remark that with the martyrdom of Stephen appeared in the Church the germ of Christian intolerance. When people are ready to shed their own blood for a cause, they are usually not too scrupulous about shedding the blood of other people. This martyrdom and the persecution connected with it were, however, events which produced the greatest benefits to Christianity, considered as destined to be a world-wide religion. They broke up the charming little community at Jerusalem, after it had lasted only three or four years, and sent its members to spread successfully, not all of their ideas, but some of them, in many directions.

Samaria was the scene of the first Christian mission, more especially the capital of that district, with the villages lying between it and Jerusalem. This mission, in which both Peter and John were engaged, was continued by Philip, who extended his travels to Azotus, baptizing on the way the Eunuch of the Candace of the day, and passing thence up the coast as far as Cæsarea, the half-Roman town

which Herod the Great had built on the ruins of a Sidonian fortress, and which now, thanks to one of those strange epigrams of events which are among the delights of history, is inhabited by Bosnian refugees of Slavic descent, who preferred to leave their country at the time of the Austrian occupation. This mission of Philip's brings us down to the ever-memorable year 38—the year of the conversion of St. Paul. Renan gives the only account of that event which can be given, except by those who suppose it to have been a miracle. He believes it, in other words, to have been the result of a subjective impression, aided possibly by some external circumstance which may have occurred simultaneously. That events of this kind have occurred in our own times, and have produced the most extraordinary effects upon the lives of individuals, is a fact familiar enough to those who take a sufficient interest in such things to have examined the question. I shall have to speak later about Renan's view of St. Paul, and need not allude to it here further than to say that, although he is as little Pauline as may be, and rejects in the strongest possible way the notion of the Comtists that Paul was the real founder of Christianity, he admits fully that but for the impulse which St. Paul gave to it, it

might have died out, as the Essenes actually did.

The twelfth chapter contains an extremely brilliant account of Antioch, at the period of which I am speaking, a city of some 500,000 inhabitants, inferior only to Rome and Alexandria. The new teaching had been brought from Jerusalem to the Orontes by Cypriote and Cyrenian converts, and appears to have spread rapidly in a portion of the city inhabited by the humbler classes. There it was that its disciples first attracted the attention of the Roman authorities as a community, and it was from these authorities that they received the Latin, not Greek, name of *Christiani*—a name which has had most brilliant fortunes in other parts of the world, but has never superseded that of Nazarene in the lands where the new religion had its birth. Barnabas, whose action, all through this period, Renan rightly brings into relief, had the happy idea of fetching St. Paul from Tarsus, whither he had retired, to Antioch, a step which had a decisive effect both on their joint career and on the future of the world. The earlier portion of the thirteenth chapter should be studied in connection with this subject. The fourteenth contains a very interesting account of the attempts which were made by a section of

the Jews to set on foot a sort of counter propaganda to that of Christianity. The position of Judaism at this time was, in some ways, a little like that of Catholicism in our own day. There were on one side the Pharisees, narrow and conceited theologians who could hardly gain any more converts than the foolish people who adhere to all the nonsense of the Syllabus, and on the other hand pious people, "mille fois hérétiques sans le savoir," but rich in good works and full of zeal, ready to explain away all that highly-orthodox nonsense, and to make the ways of divine love as easy as possible. They were Jews of the latter type who gained to Judaism the royal house of Adiabene on the Tigris, Persian in origin and manners, which adhered about this time to the religion of which Jerusalem was the centre. This well-intentioned movement came to nothing, for the fanatical party was far too strong, and in the next twenty years Palestine became more and more a sort of madhouse, where things got ever worse and worse till the great ruin came.

Another curious religious movement of the time, lying outside as well of the more liberal form of Judaism, of which I have spoken, as of Christianity, is that which is connected with the name of Simon Magus, otherwise called

Simon of Gitto, very probably the village known as Jett, which one leaves to the left, on the way from Nablous to the pass leading round the eastern end of Carmel into the Plain of Esdraelon. Unfortunately, however, we know extremely little of Simon Magus ; even Josephus does not mention him, and we are obliged to piece out his history from very scattered notices. Renan tells us, in his fifteenth chapter, all that is known or can be plausibly guessed about this very enigmatic personage in the earlier period of his history ; but he returns to the subject in a later portion of the *Origines*. After this digression he explains the general situation of the times—shows how the *Pax Romana* made the propagation of Christianity possible ; how the new religion followed the lines of Jewish emigration ; and how the wide diffusion of the Syrian race was also very useful in spreading the religion which had taken so firm a hold in its capital of Antioch. In the seventeenth chapter, much of which was repeated in the Hibbert Lectures already alluded to, there is an excellent account of Roman society. It need hardly be said that Renan does not fall into the error of merely reproducing its darker side, the side we know from the Satirists. There were in those days admirable people—men of the highest virtue,

and women who could, with perfect truth, have claimed for themselves all that Cornelia claims in that Elegy of Propertius, which is one of the most precious treasures of Latin literature.[1] There was, however, a prodigious amount of corruption in all the great cities. In the provinces things were much better in many places, as Plutarch is there to testify. The government, too, of the Emperors was infinitely milder in the provinces than in the capital. Tiberius himself was distinctly a good ruler for those of his subjects who happened to have the advantage of being a long way off. Never was the proverb truer, "Under the lamp there is darkness." It was not a good moment in the Greek literary world, worse than the century which preceded or than that which followed it. The old official religion of Rome was being gradually pushed on one side by many new and foreign superstitions, Egypt being perhaps the region from which most of them came, but Syria contributing its share, and the Jews, as we see even from Horace, having no inconsiderable influence. The religions of Greece—once so strong that, as Renan well points out at page 314, Athens in its palmiest days enjoyed the advantage of a very formidable Inquisition—had grown feeble,

[1] "Desine Paulle meum lacrymis urgere dolorem," Book IV. Eleg. XI.

lived on only as Mysteries and little local customs. Stoicism was gradually working towards a social reformation; but it did not, in the first century, extend much beyond a very limited class composed of the most cultivated persons. Perhaps the least familiar part of the seventeenth chapter, on the religious legislation of the time, is all that refers to the little clubs or companies known as *Collegia* in the Roman world. At Rome only the very poorest of the people, the *Tenuiores*, were allowed to associate in this way, and they only for the purpose of defraying the cost of funeral rites. That is why Christianity, for a long time, presented itself to the eyes of the Romans as an association connected with sepulture, and why the first Christian sanctuaries were the tombs of the martyrs. As soon as it began to be seen to be something more than this, it excited alarm and provoked severities. Very important, too, are the pages of chapter xix., which set forth the truth that although Christianity had its rise in the very lowest quarters of cities, such as Antioch and Rome, there was not anything like the difference of intellectual level that now exists between the upper and lower classes. There were a very few educated and enlightened people, but nothing at all corresponding to the intelligent *bourgeoisie*

or the educated middle class of our own day. All below the very highest in point of intelligence were pretty much on a level, and not seldom there was more intelligence amongst slaves or very poor Jews and *Græculi* than much higher up in the social scale. It is in this nineteenth chapter that is to be found the account of Bâbism to which I have already referred, and which is introduced to show the astounding power of religious enthusiasm.

The last two or three pages of *Les Apôtres* are amongst the most eloquent which their author has written. I have room only for one brief extract. After pointing out that the success of religions is in proportion to what they say to the heart of the people, he adds :—

"Suit-il de là que la religion soit destinée à diminuer peu à peu et à disparaître comme les erreurs populaires sur la magie, la sorcellerie, les esprits? Non certes. La religion n'est pas une erreur populaire; c'est une grande vérité d'instinct, entrevue par le peuple, exprimée par le peuple. Tous les symboles qui servent à donner une forme au sentiment religieux sont incomplets, et leur sort est d'être rejetés les uns après les autres. Mais rien n'est plus faux que le rêve de certaines personnes qui, cherchant à concevoir l'humanité parfaite, la

conçoivent sans religion. C'est l'inverse qu'il faut dire.

. . . . .

"Supposons une humanité dix fois plus forte que la nôtre; cette humanité-là serait infiniment plus religieuse.

. . . . .

"Un être parfait ne serait plus égoïste; il serait tout religieux. Le progrès aura donc pour effet d'agrandir la religion, et non de la détruire ou de la diminuer."

The third volume contains the history of St. Paul, from the time when he went from Antioch *viâ* Seleucia to Cyprus, down to his arrival at Rome in the month of March 61. A long Introduction of seventy-seven pages explains the author's views as to the amount of importance to be attached to the Epistles which are usually assigned to St. Paul. He holds the opinion, now I believe generally accepted, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was certainly not the work of the Apostle, and he returns to the question of its authorship in the fourth volume, coming to the conclusion that it was probably written by St. Barnabas. The thirteen Epistles which claim to be by St. Paul he divides into five classes:—

1. Those, the authenticity of which is un-

contested and incontestable, viz. the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans.

2. Epistles which have been contested but which he holds certainly to be St. Paul's, viz. the Thessalonians and the Philippians.

3. Epistles probably authentic, viz. the Colossians and Philemon.

4. A doubtful Epistle, viz. that to the Ephesians.

5. Epistles certainly not written by St. Paul, viz. Timothy and Titus.

Having explained these views in an Introduction addressed to students, he passes to describe, in the text, what he calls the Christian *Odyssey*, those surpassingly interesting travels which are so well recounted in the second half of the Acts, and about which we know so much more, in consequence, than we do about the times which immediately preceded and immediately followed them.

I do not propose to make any analysis of this volume. We are all born, I suppose, either to like or dislike St. Paul's cast of thought. Those who belong to the first category had better keep to *Conybeare and Howson*, a delightful book, and leave Renan alone. Those, on the other hand, who say with Jeremy Bentham, "Not Paul but Jesus," will find this life of him extremely

sympathetic. I hasten to point out that Renan does not come within a thousand miles of the absurd mistake into which the great old jurist fell, when he was unwise enough to maintain that "St. Paul's enterprise was a scheme of personal ambition and nothing more." Renan believed—what is surely as clear as day—that St. Paul was absolutely honest and in every way an extraordinary person; but he did not think that the influence of that great man upon the quality as distinguished from the quantity of Christianity in the world, had been favourable. I strongly advise all who are interested in these subjects, and are not devoted to the Pauline theology, to take this book with them to the Mediterranean and to read it amidst the scenes which it describes. Those who do not care to do that, but only desire to have a notion of Renan's general view about the Apostle of the Gentiles, should turn to chapter xxii. The substance of that chapter may be thus briefly summed up. Although St. Paul lived for at least three years beyond the year 61, his real work was done when he reached Rome. He had spread Christianity, as he conceived it, through about half of Asia Minor, a large portion of Macedonia, along some of the coast of Greece, at Malta, and in Italy from the Bay of Naples to the capital of the world. Of

course his converts were not very numerous, possibly not more than a thousand in all ; but a thousand convinced persons formed into very closely related groups, scattered over the countries which have just been named, meant a good deal. Of Jesus, as he lived on earth, no one ever supposed that Paul knew anything, and there is exceedingly little reason to suppose that he had much acquaintance with his teaching. Nothing consecutive about it can have been written early enough to have been of any use to him. His work was not very enduring. In the second or third century the churches he founded in Macedonia and Galatia were of little importance, while those of Corinth and Ephesus were controlled by the party opposed to him, and which probably rejoiced at his death as the disappearance of one who troubled Israel. He left no celebrated disciples. Titus, Timothy, and the rest disappeared when he was gone, without much trace. It is only in the third century that his reputation began to rise. In the fourth and fifth he became very famous as *the* great Doctor of the Church. Then his star waned again for a thousand years. St. Peter became all-important, and it was not till the Reformation that the essentially argumentative and protesting intelligence of this great man of action, this first-

century Luther, became once more a mighty power in the world. I quote the last words of the chapter and of the volume :—

"On sert l'idéal en faisant le bien, en découvrant le vrai, en réalisant le beau. En tête de la procession sainte de l'humanité, marche l'homme du bien, l'homme vertueux ; le second rang appartient à l'homme du vrai, au savant, au philosophe ; puis vient l'homme du beau, l'artiste, le poëte. Jésus nous apparaît, sous son auréole céleste, comme un idéal de bonté et de beauté. Pierre aima Jésus, le comprit, et fut, ce semble, malgré quelques faiblesses, un homme excellent. Que fut Paul ?——Ce ne fut pas un saint. Le trait dominant de son caractère n'est pas la bonté. Il fut fier, roide, cassant ; il se défendit, s'affirma (comme on dit aujourd'hui) ; il eut des paroles dures ; il crut avoir absolument raison ; il tint à son avis ; il se brouilla avec diverses personnes.—Ce ne fut pas un savant ; on peut même dire qu'il a beaucoup nui à la science par son mépris paradoxal de la raison, par son éloge de la folie apparente, par son apothéose de l'absurde transcendental.—Ce ne fut pas non plus un poëte. Ses écrits, œuvres de la plus haute originalité, sont sans charme ; la forme en est âpre et presque toujours dénuée de grâce.—Que fut-il donc ?

“ Ce fut un homme d’action éminent, une âme forte, envahissante, enthousiaste, un conquérant, un missionnaire, un propagateur, d’autant plus ardent qu’il avait d’abord déployé son fanatisme dans un sens opposé. Or l’homme d’action, tout noble qu’il est quand il agit pour un but noble, est moins près de Dieu que celui qui a vécu de l’amour pur du vrai, du bien ou du beau. L’apôtre est par nature un esprit quelque peu borné ; il veut réussir, il fait pour cela des sacrifices. Le contact avec la réalité souille toujours un peu. Les premières places dans le royaume du ciel sont réservées à ceux qu’un rayon de grâce a touchés, à ceux qui n’ont adoré que l’idéal. L’homme d’action est toujours un faible artiste, car il n’a pas pour but unique de refléter la splendeur de l’univers ; il ne saurait être un savant, car il règle ses opinions d’après l’utilité politique ; ce n’est même pas un homme très-vertueux, car jamais il n’est irréprochable, la sottise et la méchanceté des hommes le forçant à pactiser avec elles. Jamais surtout il n’est aimable ; la plus charmante des vertus, la réserve, lui est interdite. Le monde favorise les audacieux, ceux qui s’aident eux-mêmes. Paul, si grand, si honnête, est obligé de se décerner le titre d’apôtre. On est fort dans l’action par ses défauts ; on est faible par ses

qualités. En somme, le personnage historique qui a le plus d'analogie avec Saint Paul, c'est Luther. De part et d'autre, c'est la même violence dans le langage, la même passion, la même énergie, la même noble indépendance, la même attachement frénétique à une thèse embrassée comme l'absolue vérité.

"Je persiste donc à trouver que, dans la création du Christianisme, la part de Paul doit être faite bien inférieure à celle de Jésus. Il faut même, selon moi, mettre Paul au-dessous de François d'Assise et de l'auteur de l''Imitation' qui tous deux virent Jésus de très-près. Le Fils de Dieu est unique. Paraître un moment, jeter un éclat doux et profond, mourir très-jeune, voilà la vie d'un dieu. Lutter, disputer, vaincre, voilà la vie d'un homme. Après avoir été depuis trois cents ans le docteur chrétien par excellence, grâce au protestantisme orthodoxe, Paul voit de nos jours finir son règne ; Jésus, au contraire, est plus vivant que jamais. Ce n'est plus l'Epître aux Romains qui est le résumé du Christianisme, c'est le Discours sur la montagne. Le vrai christianisme qui durera éternellement vient des Evangiles, non des Epîtres de Paul. Les écrits de Paul ont été un danger et un écueil, la cause des principaux défauts de la théologie chrétienne ; Paul est le père du subtil

Augustin, de l'aride Thomas d'Aquin, du sombre calviniste, de l'acariâtre janséniste, de la théologie féroce qui damne et prédestine à la damnation. Jésus est le père de tous ceux qui cherchent dans les rêves de l'idéal le repos de leurs âmes. Ce qui fait vivre le christianisme c'est le peu que nous savons de la parole et de la personne de Jésus. L'homme d'idéal, le poëte divin, le grand artiste défie seul le temps et les révolutions. Seul il est assis à la droite de Dieu le Père pour l'éternité.

"Humanité, tu es quelquefois juste, et certains de tes jugements sont bons!"

This paragraph has a very special interest for me in consequence of a curious accident which occurred on the 13th October 1872. I was sitting on the evening of that day at Eski Stamboul, close to the site of Alexandria Troas, with two friends, one of whom was Mr. W. R. Greg, the author of the *Enigmas of Life* and the *Creed of Christendom.* Many of my readers will remember that Alexandria Troas is the place associated with the story of St. Paul by the vision of the man of Macedonia who urged him to pass into Europe, and will see that it was not unnatural that I should have read aloud, on that spot, to my companions, this closing chapter; but it certainly was a little strange

that exactly as I pronounced the last words—*Humanité, tu es quelquefois juste, et certains de tes jugements sont bons!*—the Muezzin should have called to prayer from the minaret close by, reminding us that the work of St. Paul had faded away from Alexandria Troas, and that there, though God was God, not Paul but Mahommed was his prophet.

CHAPTER VI

If any one who did not wish to read through the seven volumes of the *Origines*, but only desired to form an opinion of Renan as a historian, were to ask me what part of them he should read, I should certainly reply the fourth volume, that to which its author gave the name of *L'Antéchrist*. Like its predecessors it also opens with a long Introduction, but one which deals almost entirely with points as interesting to the general reader as to the student. The author begins by pointing out that the period which he is about to treat is the most extraordinary in the whole history of Christianity, with the exception of the three or four years covered by the ministry of Jesus. Up to this time the opposition between the new sect and the world into which it had been born was not very strongly marked. There had been some slight persecution on the part of the Jews; but

one important section of the Church, that which was headed by James, the brother of the Lord, and detested the Pauline innovations, was still almost a Jewish sect. Now, however, the new religion and the world, Jesus and Nero, Christ and Anti-Christ, were to come suddenly into the most deadly opposition. Almost at the same moment, too, the old Jerusalem was, for practical purposes, to disappear, and the revolution which was to make the seat of Anti-Christ into a holy city, a second and greater Jerusalem, was to begin.

Having explained this, Renan proceeds to enumerate and to criticise the documents, within and without the Canon, from which our information about this momentous epoch is derived. In this portion of his Introduction I should like to call attention more particularly to the passages where he shows that, although the opposition between the Pauline party and the Judaizing party was very bitter, there were, from the first, indications that a compromise was not impossible. There is no reason to suppose that St. Peter was a thorough-going Judaizer like St. James or like the author of the Apocalypse, who hated St. Paul with all his heart and soul. St. Peter fluctuated between the two parties, and it was his tendency which ultimately prevailed, as the

great Basilica of Christendom is there to show. The central portion of the Introduction is devoted to the question of the authorship of the Apocalypse, the one of all the Biblical writings the date of which we know most exactly. Unfortunately the authorship is much more obscure than the date. Renan comes to the conclusion that it most certainly proceeded from the immediate *entourage* of John the Apostle, one of the most ardent of all the Judaizers, the son of Thunder, the Boanerges of the Gospels. That it was written by him is much more doubtful. Many of its features are such as could hardly have been found in a work actually written by one who had seen and lived with Jesus. We may conclude, then, rather that the Apocalypse was accepted and sanctioned by St. John than actually a product of his pen. It seems not unlikely that when the prophecies contained in it were seen to have failed in their accomplishment, that Jerusalem had been destroyed, the Roman Empire reconstituted under the Flavian dynasty, and the world going on just as before, although the three and a half years assigned by the Seer of Patmos for its continuance had come to an end, the book fell for a time into comparative neglect. Anyhow it was only about the middle of the second

century that it became important. Even after that time it had periods of occultation, always gaining new importance during seasons of persecution. Towards the end of the Introduction Renan falls into general considerations, all very suggestive, some bearing upon Italy and the protestations which have from time to time arisen there against certain of the peculiarities of Christianity when pushed to an excess. These are followed by remarks on the state of contemporary French politics, and by the following passage :—

"Peut-être, d'ailleurs, ce volume, bien que s'adressant avant tout aux curieux et aux artistes, contiendra-t-il plus d'un enseignement. On y verra le crime poussé jusqu'à son comble et la protestation des saints élevée à des accents sublimes. Un tel spectacle ne sera pas sans fruit religieux. Je crois autant que jamais que la religion n'est pas une duperie subjective de notre nature, qu'elle répond à une réalité extérieure, et que celui qui en aura suivi les inspirations aura été le bien inspiré. Simplifier la religion n'est pas l'ébranler, c'est souvent la fortifier."

The first chapter of the text commences with a vigorous sketch of Nero, and recalls the story told by Tacitus of the execution of the four

hundred slaves of Pedanius Secundus just about the time when St. Paul entered Rome. This is followed by a page as well worth reading, and a great deal more agreeable to read, on Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Aulus Plautius, the Conqueror of Britain, who may possibly have been a Christian, and the first saint of the great world at Rome. The rest of the chapter traverses familiar ground, the narrative being based for the most part on the Acts and on the Epistle to the Philippians.

In the second chapter is raised the difficult question whether St. Peter was or was not at Rome. The materials for settling it finally do not exist; but all probability is in favour of the belief that he was, and that he arrived in the city, of which he was to be the king for ages piled on ages, very soon after St. Paul.

The third chapter deals with the state of the Judæan Church, using naturally, amongst other documents, the beautiful Epistle attributed to St. James, written in better Greek than any part of the New Testament, and no doubt representing extremely well the ideas of the Apostle, though drawn up by another hand, for James, the brother of the Lord, certainly did not speak Greek. Its tone is very much that of the first three Gospels, and Christ is spoken of as the

Messiah without any of the hyperbolical expressions which St. Paul employed.

St. James acted as a kind of link between the Jews and the Christians. The best of the former had apparently considerable regard for him, and, when he was put to death by the High-Priest Annas, the impression made upon the multitude was very bad. No doubt the cause of his popularity was partly that, like many of the ancient prophets, he attacked, with much violence, the rich and the constituted authorities; but he had earned the reputation of a saint alike among the followers of the old and the new religion.

It is interesting to observe that in the Epistle of St. James the germ of almost all the Catholic Sacraments is already to be found, while the doctrine to which so many Protestant sects have attached such importance, the doctrine of justification by faith, is repudiated distinctly and categorically.

Meantime things got worse and worse all through Palestine. Festus, who had done his best under most difficult circumstances, had been succeeded by Albinus, a worthless ruler. The party of the Sadducees, which was at the head of affairs, tried repression; but the whole country had got out of hand. Brigands and assassins,

cloaking themselves sometimes under attachment to the Law, were gradually becoming the most powerful element in it.

To this period belong the apocalyptic ideas to be found in the three first Gospels, which were now growing slowly into shape, and phrases were attributed to Jesus which were probably first used some five and twenty or thirty years after his death.

From Palestine we are taken back to Rome, and a chapter is devoted to the later history of St. Paul, whose theology Renan thinks was considerably altered during his captivity, founding his opinion upon the Epistle to the Colossians and that to the Ephesians, which last he believes to have been a sort of circular letter of St. Paul's, certainly not addressed to the Ephesian Church, but of which a copy may have been left with it. The pages from 101 to 103 in the first edition of *L'Antéchrist* are particularly interesting, not so much in their bearing on St. Paul as from the light they throw upon Renan's own character.

In the latter part of the chapter there is an interesting account of the First Epistle of St. Peter. That Epistle, unlike the Second, which is, I believe, generally given up, Renan holds to have been really from the hand of the Apostle,

inspired, that is to say, and supervised, not actually written by him, since it is very unlikely that he knew any other language than Syro-Chaldaic.

The next three chapters relate the story of Nero's fire and the persecution of the Christians to which it directly led. Renan can hardly have lived out his life in the Paris of our day without suffering many things from the bad artists who rave about bad art for bad art's sake. If he did, he has taken an amusing revenge, for his character of Nero is the *reductio ad absurdum* of the works and ways of all that tribe of people. The monster, who for only too good reasons became "The Beast" of the Apocalypse, has never been so well sketched.

Renan believes that St. Peter and St. Paul both perished in the frightful autumn of 64, but nothing absolutely certain can be made out. There is reason, too, to believe that St. John may have been involved in these horrors, but that he escaped with his life and returned to Asia.

The Neronian persecution paralysed, for a time, the infant Roman Church. Many of its adherents, living chiefly in the most wretched quarters of the city, such as the Trastevere or the neighbourhood of the Porta Latina, slipped

away unobserved, and escaped to other places. A good many, perhaps, went to Ephesus, where a keen opposition soon showed itself between the Judaizers, who gathered round St. John, and the disciples of St. Paul. Some Christians, however, remained in Rome, and a few of the emigrants seem to have returned very soon. Renan thinks that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to these Roman Christians from Ephesus by St. Barnabas, and his theory, though it cannot possibly be proved in the existing state of our information, seems extremely plausible. The dreadful scenes through which they had passed turned the thoughts of the Christians everywhere to persecution and martyrdom. This appears very much even in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and was soon to become much more apparent in the Apocalypse. Other elements, however, had to come together before that astonishing book could be written.

In chapters x., xi., xii. are painted with infinite clearness and vigour the revolution which now burst forth in Judæa, the flight of the Christians, the terror at Jerusalem, the Syrian and Egyptian massacres, and the operations of Vespasian in Galilee. Good comes out of evil, and Renan would perhaps never have been able to describe so well this hideous time, if he had

not lived through the days of the Paris Commune.

Nero came to his end on the 9th of June 68. To all the respectable portion of society his death was a great deliverance; but he was regretted by the viler part of the multitude, on account of the perpetual round of amusement which he provided for it. In an ignorant age, when communication is exceedingly imperfect, it is very easy to imagine that a person who is regretted is not actually dead, but hidden somewhere and likely to return. This was the case with Nero. Only two or three people had actually seen him dead, and a rumour prevailed amongst the populace that he had been smuggled away to Parthia, and would return to take vengeance on his foes as an Oriental conqueror. These wild ideas extended to the Christians; but in their breasts, it need hardly be said, the prospect of Nero's return inspired only terror. There mingled, however, with this terror those apocalyptic fancies which I noticed a page or two back. At the same period the Roman world was rent by civil war; one after another the names of Vindex, Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian, fell on men's ears. Many desperate battles were fought, some under circumstances peculiarly

striking to the imagination. All through these years, too, of horror and panic in the moral world, there was an extraordinary series of catastrophes in the material world. In one of the numerous earthquakes of the period Colossæ, the centre of the Seven Churches, almost disappeared, a circumstance which, although very much the reverse of exceptional at this time, not unnaturally impressed the Christian community.

It was out of the ferment of mind caused by all these tremendous events in politics and in nature that the Apocalypse arose. The circumstances which determined the exact moment of its composition were the rumour that Nero had returned and had taken possession of the island of Cythnos, as an impostor pretending to be Nero actually had done, in the end of the year 68 or the beginning of the year 69, and the fact that just at the same time an ardent Neronian at Ephesus had apparently made a movement in favour of the impostor of Cythnos, or of the Nero whom he imagined to be concealed amongst the Parthians.

Before proceeding to give an account of the Apocalypse, Renan sets down a list of its principal predecessors and successors, beginning with the Book of Daniel, which, as every one now

knows, belongs to the period of Antiochus Epiphanes, say to about 164 B.C.

He then analyses this most remarkable book, keeping generally to the views which are now usually held by those who examine it merely objectively, and with no desire to anathematise any one of whom they disapprove—Pagan or Christian, Catholic or Protestant, spiritual ruler or temporal ruler, power of the earth or power of the air. To all such persons much of the book is clear as day, though much of it will remain, to the end of time, an enigma, seeing that we have not got the information necessary to enable us to understand many of the allusions. It is clear as day, for instance, that the beast is Nero, and that the number 666 is the Greek form of his name, ΝΕΡΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ,[1] spelt with Hebrew letters, each letter receiving its numerical equivalent in that language; but it is not at all clear who was the false prophet, though it was probably some impostor of Ephesus. Babylon is of course Rome; the seven heads mean the seven hills and also the seven emperors—Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba. The

[1] A variant long prevailed in the West, being the translation of the Latin Nero Cæsar into Hebrew, giving 616 instead of 666. To this hour the name of Antichrist in Armenian is Neren.

first five are dead, Galba reigns for the moment, but is old and near his end. Nero, who is at the same time "The Beast" and one of the seven kings, is not dead in reality, but will reign again for a short time, be thus the eighth king, and will then perish. The ten horns are the proconsuls and imperial legates of the ten principal provinces, whom the author of this partly religious but also partly political pamphlet expected to combine and destroy Rome. This done, the saints are to reign for a thousand years. Then evil is once more to be unloosed in the world, but not for long, since after a brief period of confusion is to come the final consummation of all things and the New Jerusalem.

The imagination of the writer was obviously affected by two separate currents, the one coming from the old Jewish prophets, the other from Babylonia and Persia. The constant use of the number seven carries one back to the former country, while the millenary ideas are akin to those of the Parsee religion. Not that the writer had any direct connection either with Babylonia or the faith of the Fire-worshippers, but, ever since the Captivity, ideas derived from these two sources had been filtering into the Jewish mind.

During the year which immediately followed the composition of the Apocalypse, it looked very much as if its prophecies were going to be fulfilled. Then things righted themselves; Jerusalem was crushed, and Rome went on much as before.

For some considerable time the meaning of this extraordinary book was fairly understood; gradually, however, as the ages passed on, the key was lost, and in the interval between the middle of the second century and our own age the writers who had any clear notion as to what its author was driving at, were few and far between. All that has not prevented the Apocalypse inspiring a great deal of good literature, and its language will, we may be sure, for a long time to come, be used to express the hopes and dreams of men about the future. The *Paroles d'un Croyant* stands in the same relation to the Apocalypse as the Apocalypse does to Ezekiel, and so do a thousand hymns and poems of the last eighteen centuries.

The last three chapters of the fourth volume describe the advent of the Flavian family to supreme power, and the ruin which fell upon Jerusalem, when Vespasian and Titus were able to turn their attention to the affairs of Palestine. At the end of the eighteenth chapter, however,

Renan points out, with great truth, that the furious sectaries who maintained that Jerusalem was eternal, were in a sense not so far wrong after all, for the destruction of the Jerusalem of stone and lime marked the moment when the spiritual Jerusalem became the capital of the world. The skeleton of the old religion has lived long while the spirit passed into Christianity. "History," says Renan, "has no more curious spectacle than this conservation of a people in the condition of a ghost." Had the stone and lime Jerusalem continued to exist, Christianity would never have lived with its own life. The surviving relatives of Jesus might easily have grown into a sort of sacerdotal caste. As it was, they and all those immediately dependent on them took refuge beyond the Jordan, becoming in time the sect of the Ebionites, and eventually dying out, while Christianity was gradually built up out of the teaching of Jesus, the widely different ideas of St. Paul, together with all that it could assimilate in the civilisations of Greece and Rome.

The fifth volume bears the title of *Les Evangiles et la Seconde Génération Chrétienne.*

In a work covering that period it was necessary to discuss the much-vexed question of the

authenticity of the Epistles, attributed to Ignatius of Antioch, in their longer, shorter, and shortest forms. This is done in the Introduction, and Renan, without denying that there may in the shortest collection be other matter which is really the work of Ignatius, inclines to the opinion that only the Epistle to the Romans proceeded from his hand. The end of the Introduction, upon the faults which mar the great merits of the Tübingen school, deserves to be well weighed. Renan himself steers a middle course between those who use all the resources of learning to bolster up writings which cannot fairly be defended, and the exaggerated scepticism which rejects *en bloc* so much of the early history of Christianity.

Pages 4 and 5 contain his general view about history. Aristotle, he says, was right in asserting that "there is no science save of things in their generality." We do not know the exact detail of anything. What it is really important to know are the general lines, the great facts which come out clearly, and which would remain true, if even all the details were erroneous.

Let any one try to make out the exact truth about something which happened yesterday in the next street or the next parish. After examining eye-witnesses he will learn what to

think about the minute details of history, and perhaps also about the wisdom of those teachers who attach importance only to the exhaustive study of short periods.

The destruction of Jerusalem stunned for a moment the Jewish people. The Sadducees and the sacerdotal aristocracy had been nearly all massacred by their fellow-citizens in the year 66. The Zealots, the Assassins, and the Brigands were nearly all killed in the sieges of Jerusalem, at Masada, or in one of the other fortresses which held out after the fall of the Holy City. Only the Pharisees survived in any large numbers. They were the middle class, had taken little part in politics, were as hostile to the extreme fanatical party as to the Sadducees, and were occupied almost exclusively in fulfilling the complicated requirements of the Thora or Law. Many of them had left the city before the attack of Titus; others followed after the conclusion of the siege, and they made their home, for the most part, at Lydda on the plain of Sharon, at Jamnia, south of Jaffa, and in the villages between them.

The Christians of Jerusalem, on the other hand, had fled beyond Jordan, chiefly to Pella. The particulars of their flight we do not know, but there can be little doubt that it was accom-

panied by much danger, and that the description of the woman fleeing before the dragon, in the Apocalypse, is a direct allusion to their adventures. The Pharisees in the west of Palestine devoted themselves ever more and more to subtle disquisitions on the Law. Rabbis of authority gave answers to questions answering to the *Responsa prudentum* of early Roman jurisprudence, and out of these, in the course of time, was to grow up the Talmud.

The Christian community in the East kept as close to the traditions of James and to the Jewish law as circumstances permitted, but held firmly to the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, mixing up, however, with their recollections of him many ideas which were not his, but which arose in the midst of their community.

One of the many places to which the Jewish middle class had fled before the siege of Titus was Bether, a few miles to the south-west of Jerusalem; and after the fall of the city, the fugitives there were reinforced by a considerable number of people belonging to what would be called, in the revolutionary terminology of the present day, the Party of Action. It was at Bether that some person unknown, filled with patriotic enthusiasm, composed the curious romance known as the Book of Judith, which

was adopted by the Christian Church, and still forms part of the Apocrypha or Greek Scriptures. About the same time, too, the Canon of the Old Testament began to be settled; and it is strange that a number of books, such as the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach, Ecclesiasticus, and the first book of Maccabees, much more valuable than either Daniel or Esther, were not admitted into the Jewish Canon, but were saved, probably from utter destruction, by the Christians.

A new peril menaced the Church beyond Jordan, at this time. This was the exaggerated importance given to the relatives of Jesus. Had it not been for the very different influences which were prevailing in other portions of the Church, it is quite possible that the principle of heredity might have destroyed the new religion. We have a trace of this in the genealogies which are to be found in the Synoptic Gospels, and which have no historical value, except as showing that partisans of the primacy of the immediate kindred of the Prophet of Nazareth were anxious to raise their position as much as possible, by connecting them with the old Jewish royalty. Precisely the same danger menaced Islam with destruction, and exerts to this day a very considerable and maleficent influence on the fortunes of that religion.

A good many of the refugees who had found an asylum in Pella migrated ere long to Kokaba in Batanæa; but the distance between the two places was small, and the relations of the communities were close. It was in this region that the first Gospel grew up, by a natural and indeed inevitable process, from the fusion of the brief accounts of the sayings and doings of Jesus, which had been first handed down by oral tradition and then committed to writing. These primary collections were, we may be sure, not at all unlike the little book known as *Pirké Aboth*, a collection of the sayings of celebrated Rabbis from the days of the Maccabees down to the second century of our era. Possibly the Sermon on the Mount may have been one of the earliest of them—that is to say, one of the first artificial groupings of the sayings of Jesus. It was in the natural order of things that, as the Christian community meditated over the recollections that had come down to them, they should see, in this or that event, some correspondence with words of the ancient prophets; and that they should imagine that these venerable persons had foretold circumstances in the life of the Master. It was not a long step from this to dream of events in his life which seemed to correspond to passages in the Prophets—

passages relating to events which were expected to occur in their own time—by these ardent publicists, reformers, and preachers.

The first Gospel was originally written in Syro-Chaldaic, and was long preserved amongst the Syrian Christians. It must have resembled a good deal the Gospel of St. Matthew, but that work is certainly not a translation of it.

Meantime, however, it was only natural that the same cause—the disappearance of those who actually remembered Jesus—should make it necessary for the Greek-speaking Christians also to have a record of his life. That led to the composition at Rome of the Gospel of St. Mark, the work of John Mark, familiar to us from the Acts of the Apostles. Though written by him it might be not improperly described as the Gospel of St. Peter, for the influence of that Apostle, who was, it may be remembered, a relation of John Mark, is visible throughout.

Having carried us thus far in the history of the formation of the Gospels, Renan retraces, in a single chapter, the relations of Christianity and the Empire under the two first monarchs of the Flavian dynasty, and then notices the commencement of the new religion in Egypt, which remained for some time closed to it, partly because the allied movement of Philo

had taken hold of the very minds in that country which would have been most likely to be attracted by Christianity. Particularly interesting is his account of the Alexandrian form of Apocalyptic writing, and especially of the work of the Sibyllist, the remarkable poem which appeared about a dozen years after our Apocalypse, and may, or may not, have been the work of a Christian. How long this poem, which put itself under the protection of the name of one of the fabulous prophetesses of early Greece, retained its hold on the Christian imagination may be seen from the first lines of the "Dies Iræ":—

> "Dies iræ, dies illa,
> Solvet sæclum in favillâ,
> Teste David cum Sibyllâ."

On the foundation of the Gospel of St. Mark was built up, with more literary skill, the second Greek Gospel, the Gospel known as that according to St. Matthew, in which are introduced a large number of new facts quite unknown to the older writer. Such are the Genealogy, the Supernatural Birth, the Visit of the Magi, the Flight into Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocents, and much else. German scholars have long ago worked out excellently well these

curious discrepancies, and their labours have been made familiar to every one interested in the Bible, by many English books.

The history of the composition of the Gospel put under the protection of the name of St. Matthew — but assuredly not written by the Apostle of that name—can only be guessed at. It was probably written in Syria for Jews whose language was Greek. The occasion of its composition was, perhaps, the circumstance that the Gospel according to St. Mark, when it arrived in Syria, appeared strangely bald. It depended almost entirely on the recollections of St. Peter, while the Christians who remained in Syria had enjoyed the advantage of hearing the recollections not only of one but of many Apostles, and had unconsciously, as always happens with traditions, been weaving into them ideas of their own, ideas which had only arisen in the minds of the generation following the death of Jesus. As a composition St. Matthew is inferior in historical value to St. Mark, but its literary value is far greater. Its beauty has been the cause of its power, and it certainly well deserves the foremost place which it occupies in the Canon of the New Testament. The author seems to have been a partisan neither of St. Peter nor of St. Paul; but he saw the importance of bringing

into relief the position of the former Apostle. His dislike of the Pharisees is most strongly marked, and, as we have already seen, he admits a great deal of legendary matter, which has been very important since in the formation of dogma, but which was quite unknown to St. Mark.

A chapter devoted to the half-Christian relatives of Vespasian, such as Flavius Clemens, and to Josephus, leads us on to an account of the Gospel of St. Luke, which proceeded, Renan believes, from a circle at Rome closely connected with that society. St. Luke had evidently the Gospel of Mark in his hands, and used it as the substratum of his narrative. He introduced, however, a great many new elements, and, unlike the authors of the two first Gospels, who were neutrals, was evidently, as might have been expected from what we know of his history, a partisan, though an extremely moderate and reasonable partisan, of St. Paul. His Gospel is by very much the best of the three from a literary point of view. It leaves also on the mind a most agreeable impression as to the character of the writer. With the exception of the portion relating to Zacharias and his family, which is probably taken from some earlier composition, the third Gospel is the work of a man who has only a hearsay acquaintance with

Palestine, and who, although not treating the Jews with harshness, considered that they had received, but had refused, the great offer of the kingdom made to them by Jesus. The Magnificat, the Nunc Dimittis, and other treasures of poetry, we owe entirely to St. Luke, and he also must have the credit of having been the first writer, known to us, who began that exaltation of the person and character of the Mother of Jesus, which has produced such astonishing results in the world. Considered from the point of view of the historian, the third Gospel is inferior to both its predecessors; but here and there it may give us valuable historical information which the others have missed. Thus the account of the Last Supper is substantially the same as that in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which was composed as early as the year 57. Renan also draws attention to the very great superiority of the discourses attributed to Jesus in St. Luke as compared with the discourses attributed to the Apostles by the same writer in his subsequent work, drawing the natural inference that the former had been already written down in accordance with tradition, whereas the others were largely composed by St. Luke himself.

The persecution of Domitian struck not only

the Christians but the philosophers, and was directed indeed more against virtue generally than against any particular set of opinions. After noticing it, Renan proceeds to give an account of Clement of Rome, whose authority was so great in the Roman Church that his position, although even bishops hardly existed so early as an order, was almost like that of a Pope. Some German writers have believed that Clement is an imaginary person, and that what is related about him was founded upon traditions of Flavius Clemens. Renan thinks, on the contrary, that Flavius Clemens is much the more shadowy personage of the two. He believes that Clement wrote the anonymous Epistle to the Corinthians, which belongs to the period at which we have now arrived, and on which he dwells at considerable length, regarding it as a monument of the practical wisdom, profound political sagacity, and instinct of government which have usually been characteristic of the Church that was to rule the world from the Seven Hills. Still, although the general character of Clement and of his ideas stands forth most clearly in this document, which narrowly missed forming part of the New Testament, his personality is very dim to us. It hovers round the famous Church between the Cœlian and the

Esquiline, but is seen far off like a half-effaced fresco of Giotto with an aureole round the brow.

The hideous reign of Domitian was followed by a long period of more or less troubled calm, in which the Church greatly prospered. To this period belongs most of the book we find in our Apocrypha under the name of the Second Book of Esdras—most of it, I say, for the two first and two last chapters were written by Christians in the third century. The rest of the work was composed by a Jew, after the fall of the Flavian family, but before the Empire was once more placed on a firm basis by Trajan. It seems to have been written in the same sort of Greek as that which is characteristic of the Apocalypse. The original is lost, but numerous translations exist, the one familiar to the West of Europe being in Latin.

Considering that most of this extraordinarily interesting, in parts beautiful, and far too little read composition was not written by a Christian at all, but by a Jew of the most furious type—the type of the Zealots and Assassins who figured amongst the principal defenders of Jerusalem against Titus—it is very interesting to observe how much of what is popularly supposed to be Christian doctrine is derived

from it. Almost the whole eschatology of the vulgarer sort of pulpit orators can be traced to the ravings of this belated follower of the sectaries who massacred each other or were massacred by the Roman legions. Its almost immediate adoption by the Christians is shown by its having been much used by the writer of the so-called Epistle of Barnabas, a work, like itself, belonging to the reign of Nerva, and one of the most vehemently anti-Jewish writings of the first Christian century.

In the seventeenth chapter, a model of good historical writing, the policy of Trajan and his successors is clearly set forth, and we are made to see how it was that the Christians suffered more under them and their able successors, who tried from time to time to bring back the Golden Age of Rome, than they did under far inferior men. Trajan and those who immediately followed him believed in the old Roman ideas, in State Religion and State Control of all the activities of Society. They abhorred all institutions which were not directly under the supervision of the great central authority. In this they were wise in their generation; Christianity and the Empire had sooner or later to come to death-grips, and it is quite possible that the action of a group of good and great men kept

back the development of the new and far better religion for a hundred years.

When we arrive at the eighteenth chapter we step off the ground of firm history and come into a nebulous region, where we see "men as trees walking." That is our position when we examine the legends about St. John and the disciples who surrounded him at Ephesus. Yet, if we could only know the truth about these, we should know the exact history of the origin of the Fourth Gospel, so entirely different in character from the rest, here superior and there inferior.

It will be remembered that Renan in his first edition of the *Vie de Jésus* attributed more importance to the Fourth Gospel than he did later; but he persisted in the belief that St. John had a way of his own of relating the life of Jesus, very different from those of St. Mark and St. Luke. He thought, however, that it is to the last degree doubtful whether, long as the Apostle seems to have lived, he ever adopted the curious idea of the Logos which we find in the beginning of the Gospel attributed to him. In this eighteenth chapter is sketched the dimly seen figure of Cerinthus, the first heretic. We are in the same kind of twilight region in the twentieth chapter amongst the Syrian sects; but

in the nineteenth, when Renan is dealing with Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, if much is still uncertain, there is at least practically no difference of opinion as to the Acts of the Apostles having been a work of compromise, or, as I have already said, the first Christian Eirenicon. What happened with reference to the bitter feuds of St. Paul and the followers of St. James is very well illustrated by the remark that, a quarter of a century after the French Revolution, people were talking and writing of the Revolution as if it had been a great homogeneous movement, forgetting that those Revolutionists, whom they confounded in the same general approbation, had been such bitter foes to each other, that they had but one maxim in common—"Stone dead hath no fellow."

The rest of the fifth volume is occupied with an account of the well-known correspondence between Trajan and the Younger Pliny; with the story of Ignatius of Antioch, and of the impression which his adventures made upon Lucian; with the last campaign of Trajan, aptly compared by Renan to the Russian Expedition of Napoleon; with the hideous revolt of the Jews, in 117, throughout Egypt, Cyprus, and the Cyrenaica; with an analysis of the Apocalypse of Baruch, the last specimen of the

Apocryphal literature of the Old Testament, the work of an infuriate Jew, although, like the Book of Esdras, adopted by the Christians.

The Preface to the sixth volume gives the author's reasons for continuing his work up to the end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius, one of which was his conviction that it was not right to treat the attempt of Christianity to reform the world as an isolated fact. Other attempts were made, and noble attempts, but they failed because they were only fitted for the few, because they had too little of that mystical character which was necessary to attract the majority.

In the first chapters of the text the reign of Adrian is briefly recounted. Some space is given to the fifth book of the Sibylline verses, written by a Jew in whose mind the eclectic and tolerant Emperor raised great hopes. The story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem under the title of Ælia Capitolina is told, and the first beginnings of Christian Apologetics are traced. The earliest Apologist was a certain Quadratus of Athens, who addressed himself directly to Adrian, and he was followed by Aristides, also an Athenian. It is quite possible that their productions had some effect upon the mind of the Emperor, and it is not certain that he had not some inclination towards the new religion.

The fourth chapter is given to the group of writings connected with the name of St. John, that is to say, the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles, all evidently proceeding from the same circle, and all connected by remarkable resemblances. How and when they were composed must always remain a question, but what is quite certain is that the author was at once the father and the enemy of Gnosticism—the enemy of those who allowed the real humanity of Jesus to evaporate entirely, but nevertheless the accomplice of those who allowed it to withdraw under the veil of a sort of Divine abstraction. In pages 58 and 59 Renan sums up very clearly the points in which he considers the Johannine traditions superior in historical value to those of the Synoptic Gospels; but as a document representing how Jesus taught, he thinks the Fourth Gospel of no more value than are the Dialogues of Plato for the history of Socrates.

In the next chapter it is shown how the metaphysical notions, of which we see the beginnings in the Gospel of St. John, developed into all the subtleties of what is known as Christian Theology. Gnosticism and the Fourth Gospel appeared from the same point of the horizon and were closely related to each other;

but in so troubled an atmosphere it is not surprising that the keenest critic cannot see very clearly. It took a long time for the Fourth Gospel to arrive at a position of great authority, and it cannot be said to have done so before the end of the second century. As for the Johannine Epistles, Renan thinks that it is quite possible that the mysterious person known as Presbyteros Johannes was their author, and he may, for all that is known to the contrary, have had something to do with the Fourth Gospel also; but the Epistles are not, like it, put under the protection of the name of the Apostle, a proceeding which, of course, had not, in those days, attached to it the slightest vestige of impropriety. To connect a new work with a great name was to pay homage to that great name, as well as to claim respectful attention for the views held by the writer.

In the sixth chapter is set forth the progress of the Episcopate. It is shown how every Ecclesia, as every club, required a sort of hierarchy if it was to last. The very first congregations of Christians were not intended to last. The immediate return of Jesus was looked for, and no organisation was necessary. When that return was postponed, people began to think that, although it was absolutely certain to take

place before their own generation had passed away, a good many years might elapse before it did take place. The elder and more important members of each Ecclesia naturally then got the charge of its affairs. These grave persons, grave as they were, required a president, if everything was not to be in confusion. The president gradually became the bishop, and in the Epistles to Titus and Timothy the hierarchy is full grown.

These Epistles were assuredly not the work of St. Paul, but belonged to the period of which I am writing, that is to the reign of Adrian. Their non-Pauline origin does not prevent them being documents of the greatest possible interest and value, full of good sense and full, early as is their date, of Catholic piety. They were probably composed at Rome, and it is perfectly possible that the writer may have had in his hands genuine letters of St. Paul, parts of which he incorporated with them. A little later than these, or very much about the same time, may be placed the Second Epistle of Peter, the chief object of which appears to have been to reassure those of the faithful who began to wonder how it was that half a century had passed since those events occurred which their fathers believed to be the immediate precursors of the Second Coming

of Jesus. With this work, in which use is made of Second Esdras and of Baruch, as well as of the much older Epistle of St. Jude, closed the Canon of the New Testament.

Christianity had accomplished the first duty of a new religion ; it had introduced into the world a new sacred book. A second Bible had been added to the old one, very inferior in classical beauty, but much more effective for converting the world. The old Hebrew language, the language of the Book of Job, had been dead for centuries. The half-Aramaic Greek spoken in Palestine, though it had been raised to the rank of a sacred language by the Alexandrian translators of the Bible, was not equally fitted to be a vehicle for intellectual genius. The new Bible, however, in default of intellectual genius, possessed spiritual genius : "A défaut d'écrivains elle eut des hommes pleins de Jésus, qui nous rendirent son esprit. Le Nouveau Testament a introduit dans le monde une idée nouvelle, celle de la beauté populaire. C'est, en tout cas, le livre qui a séché le plus de larmes, amélioré le plus de cœurs."

The eighth chapter is given to Papias, the Bishop of Hierapolis, who knew only the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Matthew, with both of which he was profoundly dissatisfied. He wrote,

after collecting every tradition he could lay hold of, what he considered to be a perfect reflection of the teaching of Jesus. This work has been unfortunately, and fortunately, lost: unfortunately because it would have thrown light on a great many doubtful points; fortunately because it must have contained a frightful amount of nonsense. Papias, who took the predictions of the Apocalypse seriously, believed in the thousand years' reign of Christ upon earth, and put into the mouth of Jesus the wildest prophecies on that subject, some of which were afterwards annexed by Mahommed in his description of Paradise.

The next two chapters belong to Gnosticism and a whole group of early heretics, Basilides and others.

We are taken back to the main stream of history by the last revolt of the Jews. This was a movement quite as mad as that which had resulted in the campaigns of Vespasian or of Titus, and the massacres of 117. The leader was a man of whose name and origin nothing certain can be ascertained, but who is known to history by the appellation of Bar-Cocheba, the Son of the Star. Happily, it did not extend to anything like the whole of Palestine. Its principal seat was in the extreme

south, and Bether was its centre. All the southern part of Judæa was reduced to a desert before the war was done, and the heavy hand of Roman retribution fell with unreasonable severity upon Samaria, which had not taken part in the insurrection. From this time forward the Jewish nationality, considered as a political entity connected with a definite district, disappeared from the world. The fanaticism of a succession of prophets from the days when they raged against the policy of Ahab, because he tried to knit closer relations with his Phœnician neighbours, had produced its natural fruits. Israel ceased to be one of the powers of the earth in the sense in which Babylon, Egypt, Athens, or Sparta were powers at various periods of history ; but it is only just to add that the very same prophets, who ruined the earthly hopes of their nation, made Israel, through Christianity, the greatest moral and spiritual power in the world.

Pleasanter than the pages which tell of the ruin, achieved by the Son of the Star, are those which describe a sort of oasis amidst the Solfatara of Judaism, the charming idyllic romance of Tobit, which was composed about this time by a Jew, perhaps of Adiabene. The account of it leads on to a most instructive chapter on

the Talmud, which began to consolidate itself when, after their last revolt, most of the survivors of the Palestinian Jews retired to Galilee.

The Talmud has been the intellectual Ghetto in which the great majority of the Jewish race has deliberately shut itself up for so many centuries. Nothing is more strange than that two such dissimilar twins as the Gospels and the Talmud should both have been the products of Judaism. In the latter there are, it must be allowed, numerous striking things, many of which were collected in a memorable article in the *Quarterly Review* by a gifted Jewish scholar, with whom not a few of those who will read these lines were personally acquainted, and which is well worthy of reperusal. As a whole, however, the Talmud would seem to have been about the most mischievous labyrinth in which a race ever involved itself. I remember Dr. Kalisch telling me that he had known a person who was so well acquainted with it that if you passed a pin through any twelve pages of its twelve thick volumes, he could tell you unerringly through what words the pin had gone!

After the great revolt of the Son of the Star, the Jews and the Christians, who peopled the Roman city which had risen on the ruins of

Jerusalem, became ever more and more hostile to each other.

The Ebionites or Nazarenes, living for the most part beyond the Jordan, withdrew themselves from both the contending parties, and gradually died out; not, however, until they had given birth to Islam. Mahommed has often been incorrectly called an Arian; he was very much more nearly a Christian of the Trans-Jordanic type. These Christians helped in one work at least which has been of advantage to the world. They assisted the Jews to preserve the knowledge of the Old Testament. It was from amongst them that proceeded the very ancient version of it in Syriac, known as the Peschito, which was executed probably at Edessa. Even the western Jews neglected their own writings very much; the eastern Jews preserved them as the Brahmins preserved the Vedas.

Adrian returned to Rome A.D. 135, built the Villa of which we still see the ruins near Tivoli, reared the tomb that was to have so strange a destiny, and passed away. To him succeeded Antoninus Pius, whom Renan considers the most perfect sovereign who ever reigned — superior even in some respects to Marcus Aurelius, a very St. Louis for goodness, with much more judgment, as well as a wider

and more powerful intellect. The world grew better; the rhetoricians of Adrian's day were superseded by a superior class of philosophers. Stoicism worked hard for the improvement of mankind, and the Epicureans seem to have had, especially in Asia Minor, some relations with the Christians, sharing with them the impartial detestation with which the brutalised populace regarded all things good. Wherever it had the power, the position of the Christians became very precarious, and although there is a great deal in the story of the martyrs which is merely legendary, the general fact that a Christian took his life in his hand through all this period, as long before and afterwards, is only too well established; nor is it less true that the courage of the martyrs did much to win converts to their views, as the cases of Justin and Tertullian illustrate. Martyrdom proves nothing at all as to the truth of a doctrine; people have been always willing to die for the veriest midsummer madness in the way of belief; but it proves everything with reference to the impression which this or that doctrine has made on the mind of the martyr, and that is what is important for success.

The seventeenth chapter takes us to Rome, and introduces us to the strange romances which

grew up, chiefly amongst the Judaizing section of the Christians, always numerous there. These romances dealt largely with the adventures of Simon Magus; but often the name of that mysterious person concealed another name, that of the false apostle Paul, the enemy of the law, who had destroyed the true Church—the Church of Jerusalem, the Church presided over by St. James.

The Anti-Pauline legend was at its height, Renan thinks, soon after 125. Towards the end of the reign of Adrian it took a different form; the common sense of the Church came to the conclusion that St. Peter, St. James, and St. Paul must, one way or another, be reconciled.

Paul had, for ages after this, bitter enemies in the Nazarenes, the Trans-Jordanic Christians, and the remains of the Judaizing section in the West. He had also his extravagant disciples like Marcion; but gradually the old romance was modified. It was believed that Peter and Paul had been the best of brothers, and had even founded the Church of Corinth together. In these cases what the masses wish always wins. How many people speak of Voltaire and Rousseau as if they too had been brothers! Had they not lived in the days of printing, newspapers, and the careful conservation of docu-

ments, Garibaldi, Pio Nono, and Victor Emmanuel would have been, by this time, on the eve of being erected by the Italian populace into a group of devoted friends, who worked, in perfectly good understanding with each other, for Italian unity.

Most of the twentieth and twenty-first chapters are given to various early Christian writings, of which *The Pastor of Hermas*, a religious novel, written by a brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome, was the most important. All the chimeras of the time hustled each other in the brain of the unfortunate hero, and probably in that of the author of the work. He was an Ebionite in his way of understanding the Kingdom of God and the mission of Jesus. He was a Gnostic in his tendency to multiply beings of a supernatural kind. Not satisfied with one guardian-angel he provided every man with a pair, one who led him to good and one who led him to evil. These are only two of the strange beliefs which he mixed together, and it is extremely fortunate for the sanity of Christendom that the work, though very favourably received in some Churches, in that of Alexandria for example, did not effect a lodgment in the Canon.

After a chapter on Marcion, Renan resumes the main line of Christian development with

Justin of Neapolis, the city founded by Vespasian on the site of the ancient Sichem. Justin was an ardent controversialist, a man of rather weak head, but of an excellent heart as well as of considerable learning, and the first doctor of the Church properly so called. He was full of ideas which would, when Christianity was fully developed, have been treated as heresies, but on the whole a useful advocate, chiefly, perhaps, because he attached so much importance to the writings of the old Greek philosophers, considering Socrates and the rest as precursors of Jesus, partially enlightened by the divine Logos, whose light shone forth for the first time entirely and finally in him. This way of looking at the works of the philosophers had no doubt a conciliatory effect on many minds, though it is much to be doubted whether, if they read it, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius were not more estranged by the weakness and follies of the *Apology* which he addressed to them, than impressed by its wiser and better portions.

The twenty-third chapter records the martyrdom of Polycarp, at Smyrna, and brings on the scene his young disciple Irenæus. That familiar narrative leads on to the establishment of Christianity in Gaul, which appears to have been brought about by followers of the new religion,

who, like the Phocæans of old, took ship from the Bay of Smyrna for Marseilles, whence they found their way up the Rhone and established themselves at Vienne and Lyons, places soon to become terribly famous in the annals of the Church. Fourvières and Ainay in the last-named city are, from the associations connected with them, amongst the most interesting places in France. Marseilles and Arles may have received Christianity also at this time, but not Nîmes, which long remained faithful to the elder gods. Africa, too, began now to be won to the faith; but it was probably evangelised from Rome, since on the African type of Christianity, *The Pastor of Hermas*, essentially a Roman work, appears to have had considerable influence.

From Gaul and Africa we are taken back to the banks of the Tiber, where Justin, in spite of his *Apology*, was put to death; where Fronto composed a work against the new sect, and brought up his illustrious pupil, Marcus Aurelius, to distrust and to dislike the Christians.

It was Tatian, the lieutenant of Justin, who first, about this time, engaged upon that vain labour which has been attempted so many times since his day—the fusing into one concordant work the discordant narratives of the Gospels. But those which he tried to work together were

five—the three Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of the Hebrews, and the Gospel of Peter. His title of *Diatessaron* had nothing to do with our four Gospels; it is a Greek musical term, meaning "in perfect harmony." He did not know, or did not believe in, the Gospel according to St. John, and rejected the genealogies, as well as everything else, which connected Jesus with the House of David. Of course, when the matter is looked at historically and not with a view to establish some theological opinion, nothing can be more creditable to the Christian Church than that, rather than falsify and bring into fictitious harmony its four Gospels, it should have laid itself open to the criticism that the documents on which it relies for the history of the life of its founder are hopelessly irreconcilable.

When we pass out of the dogmatic stage of Christianity and rise to the conception of the religion which Jesus set forth at the Well of Samaria, it will reap the advantage of its early *bona fides*, a *bona fides* which has not been too much imitated in later ages.

The account of the *Diatessaron* is succeeded by a most interesting sketch of the Puranas of Christianity—the Apocryphal Gospels—valueless as history, of little value as literature, but containing many things which, translated into

the language of Art, have been real blessings to the world.

Side by side with the Apocryphal Gospels sprang up a crop of Apocryphal Acts and Apocalypses. Sometimes these contained very beautiful passages, as for example the description of the Adoration of the various orders of created beings, supposed to be communicated by Adam to Seth, in the Testament attributed to the former. Other productions, like the Ascension of Isaiah, were among the earliest precursors of the *Divina Commedia*. Apocalyptic writings, full of raving against Rome and predictions of its destruction by fire, probably did the Christians infinite harm, and made the masses[1] rejoice in the horrors to which they were subjected.

The seventh and last volume opens with a very brief Preface, brief, but full of matter. In it Renan points out that the second century had the double glory of definitely founding Christianity, so closely connected with the supernatural, and of seeing, side by side with it, the most remarkable struggle towards virtue unconnected with any supernatural element, of which the planet had been the theatre, up to

[1] I wonder how many more dynamite explosions it would take to put the French Anarchists outside the law, and to make the mere profession of their opinions a ticket for New Caledonia or Cayenne.

that time. He shows, too, how the ancient world, the world of Greek and Roman civilisation, ended with Marcus Aurelius in 180. By that time the Christian Church was fully constituted and able to live with its own life. Its annals after this period belong to ecclesiastical historians, while he considered his work to be simply the analysis of the successive transformations by which the germ deposited in the world by Jesus grew into a complete organism, an organism of which the history could be written with no great difficulty. "I thank," he said, "Infinite Goodness for having given me the time and zeal necessary to accomplish my difficult programme"; and then for the first time publicly announced that he intended to recount the *History of Israel* as an introduction to the *Origines*, the great work of his life. If he had determined to be strictly logical he would have begun with the most dim Semitic antiquity; but, as he said later, he was impatient to finish the most difficult and essential part of his task. Christianity, of course, really first dawned in the eighth century before Christ, when the prophet Isaiah, standing outside the ranks of the priesthood, dared to say: "Bring no more vain oblations; the new moons and Sabbaths I cannot away with: Cease to do evil; learn to do well."

The first chapter of the text of vol. vii. commences with the death of Antoninus Pius and the accession of Marcus Aurelius. Renan, as I have said, thinks that the former was in some respects the greater man of the two. He was not troubled by the demon of scrupulosity, that disquieting study of himself, that fever of perfection which distinguished his adopted son; but let us not forget, he adds, that we should not know what Antoninus Pius really was if Marcus Aurelius had not left a portrait of him, in which he has, it would almost seem, deliberately tried to depict a man better than himself. Anyhow, the fact that two such men should have been sovereigns is the glory of that order of mankind.

Renan is quite right when he says that all Marcus Aurelius wanted was the kiss of a fairy at his birth—the gaiety of heart which teaches that to smile and to enjoy is necessary to a perfect life no less than to abstain and to endure. After having drawn with great delicacy the lineaments of the man who summed up in himself whatever was best in the Ancient World, treasuring it up for us in his incomparable meditations, Renan describes, in outline, the vast reforms which were introduced at this time in the legislation of Rome, and notices the

first beginnings of that Roman jurisprudence which has conquered the world. He then describes the reign of the philosophers, drawing special attention to the vast number of philosophical sermons through which many heathen orators, the successors of Dion Chrysostom, tried to effect the same object as the Christian preachers. The theology of Maximus of Tyre was very nearly Monotheist, and he thought all forms of worship were only a more or less unsuccessful attempt to reach the same ideal.

The philosophers, however, had their faults. There was a fair sprinkling of rascals amongst them as well as of lunatics, like Peregrinus, who burnt himself to death at Olympia for the pleasure of being talked of. Very many even of their better men were quite as narrow-minded as their Christian adversaries. Fronto, as we have seen, influenced his pupil against the Christians, and a good deal of persecution took place in the reign of Aurelius, although at a distance from the capital. It must not be forgotten that even the "fierce Tertullian," who remembered those times, spoke of the "great and good Emperor" as the protector of his co-religionists. The persecutions really proceeded from the populace, the wretches who lived for the sports of the Amphitheatre and were little better than demons.

It is undeniable, however, that they could not have had their way as much as they had, if the laws had not been so hostile to all secret societies, and the Civil Government so closely bound up with the ceremonial of the State religion.

The fifth chapter gives an account of the curious romance known as the *Recognitions* of the Pseudo-Clement, which belonged to this reign, and was the work of a Roman Christian of strong Ebionite tendencies, who used the name of Clement of Rome, already mentioned, whom he made at once the author and the hero of his tale.

To this time also belongs the violent attack of Tatian against the Greeks. Although he was, as we have seen, a pupil of Justin, his ideas were very different from those of his master. He was the mortal enemy of Plato and the Sages of Athens, the predecessor of Tertullian when he said *Credo quia absurdum.* Like many defenders *à outrance* of the cause they have adopted, this prototype of Lamennais went too far, and ended by being classed amongst the heretics.

Then follow in succession a series of chapters on Gnosticism in its decadence, on the beginning of Manicheism, on Marcionism, on the Eucharist,

on the heresy of Tatian, on the great Bishops of Greece and Asia, on the question of Easter, on the recrudescence of Millenarism, and on the Montanists. All these chapters are full of curious things. I may point to page 144, where is set forth the influence of the Gnostics in transforming early Christianity, which was too Judaic for acceptance in the West, into what it afterwards became; to the Valentinian epitaph at page 147; to the exceedingly curious conversation at page 156 between Rhodon and the heretic Apelles, who seems to have ended as an exceedingly sensible man; to the account of Asceticism run mad at page 170; and to the sketch of the great ecclesiastics—Apollinaris and Melito—Dupanloups of the second century—at page 191.

In the fifteenth chapter we arrive at the complete triumph of the Episcopate over the Sects, which, by dragging it in opposite directions, very nearly tore the infant Church in pieces. By rejecting, to a great extent, the dreams of the Gnostics, the authorities disembarrassed the community of the excesses of speculation. By rejecting, to a great extent, the practice of the Montanists, they disembarrassed it of the excesses of Asceticism. The Episcopate had realised the fact that Christianity, if it was to become a world-wide religion, must suit the

needs of men and women at large, not merely of those who were called by taste or circumstances to the highest degree of sanctity. To meet the wants of these last gradually grew up the various forms of cloistral and devoted life; but the ordinary believer, from this time onward, was thought to do quite enough if he conformed to the ways of the Christian community, and obeyed his superiors.

The sixteenth chapter is mainly devoted to the incomparable little book, with the production of which Marcus Aurelius whiled away the hours which he could spare from business during his campaigns in Hungary. All the latter portion of the chapter, though far too long to quote, deserves to be read, as well from the light which it throws upon Renan as from that which it throws on the great and wise head of the Roman world. Renan evidently thinks, and perhaps justly, that that world might have been saved from ruin if the second capital of the Empire had been made at Bâle or at Constance instead of, as it eventually was, at Constantinople. It was after his meditations on the Granua that Aurelius made his journey in the East, and amongst other places visited Palestine, with whose inhabitants he was not delighted. "O Marcomanni!" he said; "O

Quadi! O Sarmatians! I have found at last some people more stupid than you!"

An account of the manner in which various forms of Gnostic and Montanist heresy found their way from the Asiatic birthplace of the Christians of the Rhone carries us naturally on to the frightful story of the martyrs of Lyons.[1]

No better agent could have been found for restoring the Church of Lyons than the excellent Irenæus, who was probably the author of the letter, describing the persecution, to the Churches of Asia. Renan thinks that he was inferior to Justin in his grasp of philosophy; but he was much more orthodox, and left a deeper trace in Christian theology. In strong contrast with him were the able controversialist Celsus and his friend Lucian, the first partially, the second entirely, rejecting the supernatural. The whole of the twenty-first chapter is given to them, as is the twenty-second to Minucius Felix and other Apologists.

Meantime, in spite of all persecutions, and in spite of the small immediate effect produced by

[1] That city has, almost down to our own times, brought into the sharpest antagonism all that is best and worst in human nature. See the memoirs of Mlle. des Echerolles, published under the title of *Une famille noble sous la Terreur*, itself a very remarkable book, which was turned by the genius of Lady Georgiana Fullerton into a novel of extraordinary beauty, to which she gave the name of *A Will and a Way*.

its Apologists, the Church grew and prospered, becoming ever more and more subject, so far as organisation was concerned, to the See of Rome. The Judæo-Christian element, which had been so strong in the capital, was gradually combined with other elements, and the anonymous Epistle to Diognetus, which belongs to this period, is characterised by a very mature theology.

After a glance at the state of Christianity in Alexandria—in the curious little state of Edessa, made famous in later days chiefly by the Apocryphal letter of Jesus to Abgarus—and elsewhere in the East, Renan rapidly reviews the geographical conquests which Christianity had made when Aurelius passed away, mentioning amongst other noteworthy things that the Latin text of the Mass was probably of African origin. He thinks that the source of the fables about the visit of St. Thomas to India was the fact that that geographical expression was used very loosely in the early days of Christianity. Any one who sailed down the Red Sea was thought to have gone to India. The Arabian province of Yemen was just as much India as Malabar. The Christians of St. Thomas, who interested me particularly when I was at Madras, cannot, I fear, by any ingenuity be proved to have had

the remotest connection with the Apostle of that name.

In treating of the last days of Aurelius one may doubt whether Renan does not blame Faustina a little more than she deserves. He rejects, as we have seen above, the calumnies which were spread about her; but it was hardly fair to expect that a woman, who chanced to be married to one of the two or three greatest men whom the world had yet produced, should be quite able to enter into all the tastes of her husband. Very amusing is the fancy picture of Commodus listening to the philosophers, much as a young lion might do at a sermon, yawning and showing his long teeth. Renan brings out, too, extremely well the very curious fact that Marcus Aurelius, in spite of all his goodness, was exceedingly popular.

The twenty-eighth chapter gives an account of Christian dogma as it was at his death, already in outline pretty much what it has been since, in the central portion of the Church, but with a good deal left hazy and uncertain, so that people lived in communion who in the days of the Council of Nice would have denounced each other as the eldest-born of Satan.

And who had made Christianity? A multitude of anonymous great men and small men, of

little groups which hardly knew what they did, of writers many of them passing under false names. The unknown author of the Epistles supposed to have been written by Paul to Titus and Timothy did more than any Council to fix ecclesiastical discipline.

A very attractive and informing chapter—the twenty-ninth—describes the Church service at this period. The influence of the Apocalypse upon it had been very great. The idea evidently was to produce on earth the adoration of the four and twenty elders and the four beasts before the throne of God. The Mass was already full-grown—the Mass in its fullest sense, not the shorn celebration now known as Low Mass. Christ himself had neither a theology nor anything in the nature of a ritual. His Benediction, on breaking the bread, was derived from the Jewish formula known as Beraka, but that does not at all prevent the Mass being, as it is unquestionably, the real and legitimate successor of the Eucharist as celebrated by him.

Sunday had by this time superseded Saturday as the sacred day of the Christians. The silly habit of making it a day of gloom, a worse Jewish Sabbath, grew up in far later ages. The Sunday of the second century was a festival. What made, indeed, the chief success of the

Christian Church was the amount of pure and innocent pleasure which fell to the lot of those who joined it. The void they felt when deprived of that was the reason why persons excommunicated, or who fell away during periods of martyrdom, were usually so very anxious to return to it. The hymns of this period were numerous; the rhythm was short and light, like the poems to which has been attached the name of Anacreon. There was nothing like the recitative of the Psalms. At page 526 will be found the names of several Latin hymns which have kept particularly well their archaic character. The catacombs were already becoming very important. The Roman civil authorities were, as we have seen, usually rather inclined to make concessions in all that related to the sepulture of the lower classes, and the entrances of many catacombs were, in addition, protected by being made amongst tombs, the private property of the person who protected them. Christian Art owes a great deal to the Gnostics; it was, says Renan, "né hérétique; il en garda longtemps la trace." The great doctors of the Church were, for some centuries, very hostile to Art, without, thank Heaven, any permanent effect—at least west of the Adriatic.

After a sketch of the manners and morals

of the Christian Church about 180—in connection with which, as with the chapter already mentioned on the Liturgy, the English reader may with much advantage turn to the chapter called "The Church in Cecilia's house," in Mr. Pater's beautiful book *Marius the Epicurean*—Renan proceeds to state the reasons which, in his opinion, chiefly led to the triumph of Christianity. These may briefly be summed up as follows:—

The first and chief cause was the unique personality of Jesus, the magic by which he attached his immediate followers to him, so that the circle went on widening and widening from decade to decade. The second was the power which the new religion had to draw into itself whatever was best in the Ancient World, save the essentially Roman virtues which were connected with Law and with the State, with Empire and with War. The third was the circumstance that it was the form of Judaism best adapted to the Aryan race, just as Islam was the form of Judaism best adapted to the Arabian race. The mythopœic faculty of the Aryans grafted their personification of the powers of nature and their countless gods upon the hard monotheistic Jewish trunk, but they came back in the shape not of gods, but of saints. The fourth was that Christianity had

the advantage of being a vast social revolution, in which the last were to be first and the first last. The fifth was that amidst the trivialities of Greek municipal life, and the grim hardness of Rome, it provided innumerable little asylums where humble people could be happy. The sixth was that, although it did little or nothing for the peasant, who long remained outside of it as a *Paganus*, it did a very great deal for the lower populations of the towns, for the artisans. The seventh was that it offered a future where all wrongs should be redressed. This alone would have enabled it to beat the philosophers who had nothing to offer, hardly even a "perhaps." It is curious to see how certain beliefs which had some of these advantages, like the worship of Isis and like Mithraism, were serious competitors with it, especially in the East.

To these causes may we not add this crowning one: that—for reasons which we cannot explain, belonging to the mysterious course by which things are ordered in the world and which defy our analysis as much as do the combinations of what is known as chance—the moment had come for a mighty change:—

> ". . . His hands may hold
> The thunder or the balance, still the power
> That masters even the Immortal is the Hour."

In dealing with such gigantic and rapid changes as those which occurred between 30 and 180 we are constrained to admit that much is, and as long as the world lasts must remain, inexplicable. All that does not prevent every paragraph, every sentence of these concluding chapters, whether we fully agree with them or not, requiring and repaying close attention.

In the very last chapter Renan tries to throw into a short formula his general view of the world in its relations to the religion whose origins he had so carefully traced through many years. It is brief enough to find a place here :—

"Grand et splendide est le monde, et malgré toutes les obscurités qui l'entourent, nous voyons qu'il est le fruit d'une tendance intime vers le bien, d'une suprême bonté. Le Christianisme est le plus frappant de ces efforts qui s'échelonnent dans l'histoire pour l'enfantement d'un idéal de lumière et de justice. Bien que la première bouture en soit juive, le Christianisme est devenu avec le temps l'œuvre commune de l'humanité ; chaque race y a mis le don particulier qui lui fut départi, ce qu'il y a de meilleur en elle. Dieu n'y est pas exclusivement présent ; mais il y est présent plus qu'en tout autre développement religieux et moral. Le Christianisme est, de fait, la religion des peuples civilisés ; chaque

nation l'admet en des sens divers, selon son degré de culture intellectuelle. Le libre penseur, qui s'en passe tout à fait, est dans son droit ; mais le libre penseur constitue un cas individuel hautement respectable ; sa situation intellectuelle et morale ne saurait encore être celle d'une nation ou de l'humanité. Conservons donc le Christianisme avec admiration pour sa haute valeur morale, pour sa majestueuse histoire, pour la beauté de ses livres sacrés. Ces livres assurément sont des livres ; il faut leur appliquer les règles d'interprétation et de critique qu'on applique à tous les livres ; mais ils constituent les archives religieuses de l'humanité ; même les parties faibles qu'ils renferment sont dignes de respect. De même pour le dogme ; révérons, sans nous en faire les esclaves, ces formules sous lesquelles quatorze siècles ont adoré la sagesse divine. Sans admettre ni miracle particulier ni inspiration limitée inclinons-nous devant le miracle suprême de cette grande Eglise, mère inépuisable de manifestations sans cesse variées. Quant au culte, cherchons à en éliminer quelques scories choquantes; tenons-le, en tout cas, pour chose secondaire, n'ayant d'autre valeur que les sentiments qu'on y met."

Such, rapidly sketched, is an outline of this most remarkable book, which deals with a

period of human history more interesting than any other to all men and women of our race. From first to last there is not a chapter in it which is not full of matter. Its tone is nowhere controversial in the very slightest degree. Renan had no wish to prove or to disprove anything. He wrote *ad narrandum*, not *ad probandum*, impelled by the desire, which so many millions have felt, to say to themselves and to other people how they think a series of events, in which they, for some reason, take an interest, followed and were connected with each other.

His attitude is throughout that of a man who says : "This is how that bit of history looks to me ; such are my opinions about it ; but if it is agreeable to you to think differently, for goodness sake do so ; it is a matter of the most absolute indifference to me what you think, provided you are happy and have no power to burn me for not being of the same mind ; unless, indeed, you have something to say against my views, which after being well-weighed and considered by me may lead me to modify some of them. If you succeed in doing that, then I shall be very much obliged to you, for you will have ministered to the strongest of my passions *la grande curiosité*." He may have been mistaken in his views of innumerable events, great

or small, in his *Origines du Christianisme*. As to that I make no assertion one way or other; but I do assert most strongly that I am persuaded every line of it was written simply because he believed it to be true and desirable to be known. Nothing is intentionally slurred or put in a wrong light. This is so much the case that superficial or controversial readers constantly accuse him of contradicting himself. To that accusation I think he would have replied: "Contradict myself; things are so complicated that it is hardly possible to speak out one's whole mind upon any political, religious, or historical, let alone any philosophical subject, without at least appearing to contradict oneself half a dozen times every hour."

An eighth volume contains a general index to the whole of the *Origines*. This is a most elaborate performance. I do not know whether it was drawn up by himself; but I have no doubt that it owed a very great deal to his hand, for I remember he told me that to make an index was a real pleasure to him.

There is a table near the end of the book giving the order in which, according to his belief, the earlier Christian writings, together with certain works bearing on Christianity, appeared. I give the principal of these up to 128 :—

About the year 54.
The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians.
The Epistle to the Galatians.
The Epistle known as that of Jude.

About the year 57.
St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians.

About the year 58.
St. Paul's Circular Epistle known as that to the Romans.

About the year 61.
The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians.

About the year 62.
The Epistle known as that of St. James.
The Epistles of St. Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon.
The Circular Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, in its present form retouched and altered.

About the year 63.
The First Epistle of St. Peter.

About the year 65.
The First Epistle to the Hebrews.

About the end of 68 or beginning of 69.
The Apocalypse.

About the year 75.
The oldest Hebrew edition of the Gospel. No longer in existence.

About the year 76.
The Gospel of St. Mark.

About the year 85.
The Gospel of St. Matthew.

About the year 94.
The Gospel of St. Luke.

About the year 96.
The Epistle of Clement of Rome.

About the year 97.
Second Esdras, and the Epistle known as that of Barnabas.

About the year 100.
The Acts of the Apostles.

About the year 112.
Pliny's Letter to Trajan about the Christians.

Nearly at the same date.
The Annals of Tacitus.

About the year 117.
Baruch.

About the year 120.
The Histories of Tacitus.

CHAPTER VII

I HAVE mentioned that the last volume of the *Origines* reached me on the 1st December 1881. The next communication with Renan, of which I have any record, occurred a month or two afterwards, when he sent me his translation of Ecclesiastes published in 1882.

To this book, which forms a companion volume to the *Cantique des Cantiques* noticed above, he prefixed a very elaborate study. It is extremely interesting to read the two volumes together, because they are, so to speak, at the opposite poles of Hebrew thought. The first shows that Israel, which we usually think of as so exclusively religious, had its days of youth and rejoicing, while the last belongs to a period of thought when a man, to repeat a phrase used to me by Brofferio, the Piedmontese orator, famous in his day, has built his *Castello delle ultime illusioni.*

The little work which we know as Ecclesiastes has for its title the letters Q. H. L. T., which Renan spells *Cohêlet*—that is, the Preacher—a word which the writer doubtless meant as a sort of *sobriquet* for Solomon; but he had evidently no idea, unlike most writers of Apocryphal books, of actually claiming Solomon as the author of the treatise. Throughout it is a sort of mixture of what he thinks Solomon might have thought, and what he did think himself; but with a great deal more of himself than of Solomon. It used to be considered a very obscure work, but obscure it certainly is not. Its date is obscure, but not its meaning. Renan thinks that it was written a little more than a hundred years before Christ, say about 125, because the state of things described in it answers pretty well to what was going on at that time in Palestine, but he puts this forward only as a probable conjecture. What gives Ecclesiastes its great importance is that, whoever wrote it, it is a book proceeding from the purely lay mind of Israel. The writer had nothing to do with the priests, and as little with the prophets. He had not a touch of the enthusiasm which made so many of his countrymen hunger and thirst after justice upon this earth, a hunger and thirst which resulted in their eventually throwing their

country under the crushing chariot wheels of Rome. As little had he any inclination whatever towards that form of belief, which afterwards developed into Christianity, through the expectation of a reign of the saints upon earth. Neither did he think that, although things here appeared to be very unjust, the justice of God would be vindicated in another world. He did not believe at all in another world; he did not expect much amelioration of things as they were in this one; but he thought that, bad as they were, they might have been worse. His creed was not very far away from the formula which we have heard in our own day: "There's nothing new, and there's nothing true, and it don't signify." That such a book as this should have found a place in the Canon of Scripture is curious enough, and it had a great struggle before it was accepted by the Doctors of Jamnia. The Christians seem not to have understood it enough to make any great difficulty about it. Probably what enabled it to survive the attacks on it were the pious reflections near the end, although it must be admitted that in modern times Graetz, one of the great Jewish scholars, has upheld the opinion that these reflections were not pious at all, but had quite another meaning. That, however, is not Renan's view, and it seems violently

improbable. Had Ecclesiastes been excluded from the Canon, we should have lost one of the most curious products of the Semitic mind, and should have found it much more difficult to explain how the Jew of our own day is so very unlike most of the Jews with whom the Old Testament or the Apocrypha or the New Testament make us acquainted. In this book we have the key to half our Jewish acquaintance :—

"Ce que le Cohélet, en effet, est bien essentiellement et par excellence, c'est le juif moderne. De lui à Henri Heine, il n'y a qu'une porte à entr'ouvrir. Quand on le compare à Elie, à Jérémie, à Jésus, à Jean de Gischala, on a peine à comprendre qu'une même race ait produit des apparitions si diverses. Quand on le compare à l'Israélite moderne, que nos grandes villes commerçantes d'Europe connaissent depuis cinquante ans, on trouve une singulière ressemblance. Attendez deux mille ans, que la fierté romaine se soit usée, que la barbarie ait passé, vous verrez combien ce fils des prophètes, ce frère des zélotes, ce cousin du Christ, se montrera un mondain accompli ; comme il sera insoucieux d'un paradis auquel le monde a cru sur sa parole ; comme il entrera avec aisance dans les plis de la civilisation moderne ; comme il sera

vite exempt du préjugé dynastique et féodal ; comme il saura jouir d'un monde qu'il n'a pas fait, cueillir les fruits d'un champ qu'il n'a pas labouré, supplanter le badaud qui le persécute, se rendre nécessaire au sot qui le dédaigne. C'est pour lui, vous le croiriez, que Clovis et ses Francs ont frappé de si lourds coups d'épée, que la race de Capet a déroulé sa politique de mille ans, que Philippe-Auguste a vaincu à Bouvines, et Condé à Rocroi. Vanité des vanités ! Oh ! la bonne condition pour conquérir les joies de la vie que de les proclamer vaines ! Nous l'avons tous connu, ce sage selon la terre, qu'aucune chimère surnaturelle n'égare, qui donnerait tous les rêves d'un autre monde pour les réalités d'une heure de celui-ci ; très opposé aux abus, et pourtant aussi peu démocrate que possible ; avec le pouvoir à la fois souple et fier ; aristocrate par sa peau fine, sa susceptibilité nerveuse et son attitude d'homme qui a su écarter de lui le travail fatigant ; bourgeois par son peu d'estime pour la bravoure guerrière et par un sentiment d'abaissement séculaire dont la distinction ne le sauve point. Lui qui a bouleversé le monde par sa foi au royaume de Dieu, ne croit plus qu'à la richesse. C'est que la richesse est, en effet, sa vraie récompense. Il sait travailler, il sait jouir. Nulle folle cheva-

lerie ne lui fera échanger sa demeure luxueuse contre la gloire périlleusement acquise ; nul ascétisme stoïque ne lui fera quitter la proie pour l'ombre. L'enjeu de la vie est selon lui tout entier ici-bas. Il est arrivé à la parfaite sagesse ; jouir en paix au milieu d'un art délicat et des images du plaisir qu'on a épuisé, du fruit de son travail. Surprenante confirmation de la philosophie de vanité ! Allez donc troubler le monde, faire mourir Dieu en croix, endurer tous les supplices, incendier trois ou quatre fois votre patrie, insulter tous les tyrans, renverser toutes les idoles, pour finir d'une maladie de la moelle épinière, au fond d'un hôtel bien capitonné du Quartier des Champs-Elysées en regrettant que la vie soit si courte et le plaisir si fugitif. Vanité des vanités !"

Renan, following a Jewish scholar, M. Nahman Krochman, to whom he gives full credit for the discovery, points out that Ecclesiastes finishes with the tenth verse of the twelfth chapter. The two verses which follow have nothing to do with the book, but were added at a time when it was the last of the Hagiographs, and the writer of the epilogue meant simply to say, "This collection is closed, let no one presume to add to it."

I am not quite sure that translating Eccle-

siastes was the best imaginable occupation for my friend, at this period of his life. For us all he did an admirable thing; he made intelligible one of the most interesting little books in the world. He did not do for the author of Ecclesiastes what Mr. Fitzgerald did in the case of Cohélet's Aryan cousin Omar Khayyám, for Fitzgerald very much improved his author; but he did all that could be done by a faithful translator. When, however, one has very bad rheumatism and another complaint which is made worse by the things which do one's rheumatism good—and this was the case with Renan—I am not quite certain that having *Vanitas Vanitatum; Omnia Vanitas* always sounding in one's ears is the best form of cordial. I think every now and then one can see, in his books written after this time, some traces of the effects of this piece of work, though infinitely less than would be found in the writings of most people who had had the same experiences.

The next communication I had with Renan which remains on my memory, was when he sent me in the autumn of the same year the *Discours* pronounced by him on receiving M. Cherbuliez at the French Academy, a month or two before. This came to hand when I was making a Tour of Inspection in Southern India, and I read it, as

well as the *Discours* of the new Academician (who was as bright and sparkling as his highly-respectable subject M. Dufaure was not), while I was imprisoned by the rain, in a little roadside bungalow between Pullode and Camp Gorge, amongst the mountains which divide Travancore from Tinnevelly. I recollect being amused by the contrast which occurred to my mind between the place where the two orations were delivered, amidst the *fine fleur* of Parisian civilisation, and the scene around me. The building, in which I was sitting, was protected by a deep trench from the attacks of the wild elephants, and we had seen all around, as we approached it, the traces left by those creatures.

It was in 1883 that I received, from their author, his delightful *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* of which I have already spoken, and to which I need not return. More people, whom I meet, seem to have read it than any of his other books.

When one finds oneself some six or seven thousand miles away from London and Paris, it is permitted to the exile to be somewhat unreasonably hungry for his friends' letters. I am sure I had as little to complain of in this way as most of my fellow-creatures who have gone to rule in the East; but now and then, no doubt,

a growl may have escaped me, and to some such expression of wrath the opening of the following charming letter from Madame Renan must refer :—

"PARIS, 30 *Janvier* 1884,
"COLLÈGE DE FRANCE.

"Vous avez bien raison, cher Monsieur et ami, de vous plaindre de mon mari ; c'est le plus mauvais correspondant qui soit en ce monde. Si la miséricorde de St. François et l'indulgence de ses amis n'étaient sans bornes, il serait exposé dans l'autre monde et dans celui-ci aux plus grandes peines.

"Cependant, il n'est pas aussi coupable qu'il le paraît, et en femme qui ne veut point se séparer de son mari, il faut que je l'excuse auprès de vous pour ne pas partager le sort dont vous le menacez. S'il n'écrit pas à ceux qu'il aime le plus c'est que sa vie entière est remplie par la tâche d'écrire pour tous ceux qui veulent entrer en communication avec son esprit. Ses vraies lettres ce sont ses livres. Mais ne croyez pas qu'il n'aime pas ses amis de l'affection la plus constante, il leur donne avec son cœur ses fréquentes pensées, toute une part idéale qui est peut-être ce qu'il y a de plus réel.

"Que de fois, en particulier, nous parlons de

vous pour qui il a une si rare estime ! Que nous voudrions être en ce moment auprès de vous, au Guindy, non pas au Guindy de la Bretagne mélancolique que nous connaissons, mais à votre beau Guindy de Madras, que nous nous figurons si lumineux, si chaud, si splendide ! Que nous aimerions à vivre sous votre ciel merveilleux, à passer des journées en rêveries en face de la plus belle nature ; interrompues par de longues causeries sur les choses intellectuelles ; c'est le plaisir divin par excellence, et nous avons gardé un si attachant souvenir de celles que nous faisions quand vous veniez nous voir et de celles que nous avons recommencées à Twickenham, que nous voudrions bien en jouir dans votre royaume de l'Inde.

"Mais hélas ! quel moyen d'y arriver quand on est lié au Collège de France, à l'Académie, à mille travaux auxquels la vie ne suffit pas ? Les Collègues de mon mari l'ont nommé cet été, administrateur du Collège de France, en remplacement de M. Laboulaye. Il a toujours placé si haut l'enseignement scientifique du Collège de France que ce choix l'a rendu très-fier. Seulement il a fallu quitter notre maison de la rue de Tournon et aller habiter le vieux collège.

"Vous savez que l'année précédente nous avions marié notre fille, dans des conditions de bonheur

sérieux et durable qui nous ont rendus très heureux. Nous nous rejouissons toujours de cet évènement de famille, et ma fille nous a donné il y a quelques mois un petit fils qui s'appelle Ernest et à qui nous souhaitons d'avoir la bonté de son grand-père comme il en a le nom.

"Jamais nous n'avons regretté autant que pendant ce mois de janvier d'avoir une vie aussi peu libre que la nôtre. Mon mari a été retenu à la chambre pendant tout ce mois par ses douleurs habituelles de rhumatisme. Ah! si nous avions pu alors aller vous trouver au Guindy! C'est la guérison et la joie du cœur que nous y aurions trouvées aussi.

"En ce moment, mon mari prépare un volume qui sera intitulé *Nouvelles Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse.* Ce sont d'anciens articles qu'il réimprime et il y en a sur l'Inde qui est inédit; il y reproduit aussi son travail sur St. François, pour qui vous connaissez sa dévotion spéciale. Il vous enverra ce volume, dès qu'il aura paru, et, en attendant, je vous envoie le Discours qu'il a prononcé au Lycée Louis le Grand.

"J'espère que Madame Grant Duff s'est bien trouvée de son séjour dans l'Inde. Je vous serais très-reconnaissante si vous vouliez lui transmettre

mes compliments les plus affectueux et lui dire ma vive sympathie.

"Mon mari vous prie de lui présenter ses hommages respectueux et de prendre pour vous ses meilleures amitiés. Permettez moi d'y joindre les miennes et l'expression de mes sentiments les plus dévoués.

"Cornélie Renan."

The Address at the Lycée Louis le Grand soon arrived, and a most admirable performance it is. I think the following page on Pessimism will be considered, by many, the very best thing that has been written on that too common malady of our times :—

"De plus sages que moi vous prémuniront contre la part d'illusion que suppose votre jeune ardeur. Ils vous annonceront des déconvenues ; ils vous diront que la vie ne tient pas ce qu'elle promet, et que, si on la connaissait quand on s'y engage, on n'aurait pas pour y entrer le naïf empressement de votre âge. Pour moi, je vous l'avoue, tel n'est pas mon sentiment. La vie qui est là devant vous comme un pays inconnu et sans limites, je l'ai parcourue, je n'en attends plus grand' chose d'imprévu ; ce terme, que vous croyez à l'infini, je le vois très près de moi. Eh bien! la main sur la conscience, cette vie,

dont il est devenu à la mode de médire, je l'ai trouvée bonne et digne du goût que les jeunes ont pour elle.

"La seule illusion que vous vous fassiez, c'est que vous la supposez longue. Non ; elle est très courte ; mais à cela près je vous l'assure, il est bon d'avoir vécu, et le premier devoir de l'homme envers l'infini d'où il sort, c'est la reconnaissance. La généreuse imprudence qui vous fait entrer sans une ombre d'arrière-pensée dans la carrière au bout de laquelle tant de désabusés déclarent n'avoir trouvé que le dégoût est donc très philosophique à sa manière. C'est vous qui avez raison. Allez de l'avant avec courage ; ne supprimez rien de votre ardeur ; ce feu qui brûle en vous, c'est l'esprit même qui, répandu providentiellement au sein de l'humanité, est comme le principe de sa force motrice. Allez, allez, ne perdez jamais le goût de la vie. Ne blasphémez jamais la bonté infinie d'où émane votre être.

"La joyeuse ivresse du vin nouveau de la vie, qui vous rend sourds aux plaintes pusillanimes des découragés, est donc légitime, jeunes élèves. Ne vous reprochez pas de vous y abandonner. Vous trouverez l'existence savoureuse, si vous n'attendez pas d'elle ce qu'elle ne saurait donner. Quand on se plaint de la vie c'est presque

toujours parcequ'on lui a demandé l'impossible. Ici, croyez tout à fait l'expérience des sages. Il n'y a qu'une base à la vie heureuse, c'est la recherche du bien et du vrai. Vous serez contents de la vie si vous en faites bon usage, si vous êtes contents de vous-mêmes. Une sentence excellente est celle-ci : Cherchez d'abord le royaume du ciel ; tout le reste vous sera donné par surcroît.

"Dans une circonstance analogue à celle d'aujourd'hui, il y a quarante-trois ans, l'illustre M. Jouffroy addressait aux élèves du Lycée Charlemagne ces sévères paroles:

"'C'est notre rôle à nous, à qui l'expérience a révélé la vraie vérité sur les choses de ce monde, de vous la dire. Le sommet de la vie vous en dérobe le déclin ; de ses deux pentes vous n'en connaissez qu'une, celle que vous montez ; elle est riante, elle est belle, elle est parfumée comme le printemps. Il ne vous est pas donné, comme à nous, de contempler l'autre, avec ses aspects mélancoliques, le pâle soleil qui l'éclaire et le rivage glacé qui la termine.'

"Eh bien, non, jeunes élèves ! C'est trop triste. Le soleil n'est jamais pâle ; seulement quelquefois il est voilé. Parcequ'on vieillit, a-t-on le droit de dire que les fleurs sont moins

belles et les printemps moins radieux? Est-ce que, par hasard, on voudrait se plaindre de ce qu'on n'est pas immortel ici-bas? Quel non-sens, juste ciel! Entre toutes les fleurs, et Dieu sait s'il en est de belles (quel monde admirable que celui de la fleur!) il n'y en a qu'une seule qui soit à peu près sans beauté. C'est une fleur jaune, sèche, raide, étiolée, d'un luisant désagréable, qu'on appelle bien à tort immortelle. Ce n'est vraiment pas une fleur. J'aime mieux la rose, quoiqu'elle ait un défaut, c'est de se faner un peu vite.

"Et puis, hâtons-nous de la dire, cette vie de quatre jours produit des fruits qui durent; la vertu, la bonté, le dévouement, l'amour de la patrie, la stricte observation du devoir. Voilà, si vous savez donner une règle supérieure à votre vie, ce qui ne vous manquera jamais. Croyez à une loi suprême de raison et d'amour qui embrasse ce monde et l'explique. Soyez assurés que la meilleure part est celle de l'honnête homme, et que c'est lui, après tout, qui est le vrai sage. Evitez le grand mal de notre temps, ce pessimisme qui empêche de croire au désintéressement, à la vertu. Croyez au bien; le bien est aussi réel que le mal, et seul il fonde quelque chose; le mal est stérile."

The copy of the *Nouvelles Etudes d'Histoire*

Religieuse, announced in Madame Renan's letter, reached me in the early summer.

The Preface to this book contains the story I have already mentioned with regard to the view of the Capuchin about Renan's future, and in a later part of the volume will be found the essay on St. Francis, upon which that excellent person's view was founded. This story is the introduction to some remarks of Renan about himself which have much truth :—

"Un idéaliste pour fonder quelque chose de durable doit être doublé d'un intriguant. Je n'ai pas eu de frère Elie."

Memorable again are his words at page vii. :—

"Des thèses pour lesquelles je fus anathématisé, au début de ma carrière, sont maintenant adoptées par des écrivains prétendant rester catholiques."

In that sentence I object only to the word *prétendant*. Mr. Mivart in his article in the *Nineteenth Century* of July 1887, much of which might have been written by Renan, says nothing that every educated Catholic will not be saying long before the next century is as old as this one. Long ere that time, too, some publisher will have done, and done much to his advantage, exactly what Renan was so much blamed for saying at pages xx. and xxi. of this

Preface. Many passages from his writings will be arranged to be read in churches. Everything will come about, as he said half laughing that it would do, everything down to the book being bound *en maroquin noir*.

How any one can doubt after reading pages xv., etc., of this Preface that his intentions were constructive and not destructive it is hard to understand. "The sermon," he says, "of St. Francis of Assisi is the compendium of all good theology." He then quotes it, and adds: "Voilà la vérité. Le monde est un chœur immense où chacun de nous a une note à tenir. La religion consiste pour chacun à faire son œuvre en chantant, à louer Dieu du matin au soir par la gaieté, la bonne humeur, la résignation."

The brilliant little essay on the "Experimental Method in Religion" should be recommended to some American with a few millions sterling to spare, and who might like to try whether it would not be possible to give himself a quite new sensation by founding a new faith in the countries east of the Jordan on the proposition that Mahommed was a great man, in that he proclaimed once more the religion of Abraham, but that the religion of Adam was a great deal better, as being applicable to the

whole human race. It is just the other day that Arabi, as nearly as possible, turned Europe, to say nothing of Egypt and Palestine, upside down, by insisting on a return to the Arabian past, to the Camel and the Palm-tree. The experiment would be worth trying by some one who had boundless wealth, and had exhausted all other pleasures.

In the next essay, a review of a book on the religions of Greece by M. Alfred Maury, there are some most interesting remarks on the merits and faults of Plotinus, Porphyry, and the last group of pagan philosophers—their noble characters, their moral virtues, and their crazy superstitions, sinking them almost to the level of the table-turners and spirit-rappers of our own day.

The next paper of importance is that on "Buddhism," a very early work of its author, which was written for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in the last days of the life of Eugène Burnouf. M. Buloz, who must have been a sort of glorified edition of Mr. John Douglas Cook, the first editor of the *Saturday Review*, read the paper, but utterly refused to believe that it had any foundation in fact: "Il n'est pas possible," he said, "qu'il y ait des gens aussi bêtes que cela."

Burnouf died, and the paper never saw the light until 1884, when it was published in this volume, with a second part, bringing the history of Buddhistic studies in France down to nearly our own times. In the paper which follows upon "Translations of the Bible" is brought out extremely well the fact that the idea of a Canon, tracing a rigorous line of demarcation between what is inspired and what is uninspired, is a Christian, not a Jewish, idea. The ancient Talmudists avow quite naïvely that they do not know whether they should or should not suppress several books which are now considered part of the Old Testament; and Rabbi-ben-Ezra was as persuaded that the chapters from xl. to the end of the book, which are attributed to Isaiah, were not written by that prophet, as is any educated man of our own day.

Renan had always a good deal of interest in Persia, partly perhaps on account of his intercourse with M. de Gobineau, portions of whose work, *Les Religions et les Philosophies de l'Asie Centrale*, he praised to me very highly; but also, no doubt, on account of the interesting side-lights which are thrown by that country on the Christianity of the West. In Persia we have an Aryan people who have taken their Semitism, so to speak, in the shape not of

Judaism but of Islam, and have been obliged, by the necessities of their Aryan nature, to alter Islam into quite another religion. The Shiah faith has given Islam what it wanted; it has furnished it with something very like a Christ in the persons of Ali, Hassan, and Hossein, without any direct imitation of the Passion, but in accordance with the same sentiments. In a paper on the Persian mystery plays known as the "Téaziés," which comes next in the volume, we have the following sentences:—

"Ainsi le génie mystique de la Perse a su donner à l'islamisme ce qui lui manquait, l'idéal tendre et souffrant, des motifs de pleurer, la complainte larmoyante, la Passion. C'est là un besoin absolu de toute religion. Depuis les adonies jusqu'à la semaine sainte, les récits, les tableaux propres à ouvrir la source des larmes n'ont manqué à aucun culte. Il est si doux de pleurer sur un Dieu rédempteur, sur une Victime qui s'est offerte pour le salut de ses fidèles, d'entonner le *planctus naturæ* 'au milieu de cet antre d'iniquités qu'on appelle le monde.' Ce sentiment est à peu près étranger à l'islamisme arabe, religion purement virile, uniquement faite pour les hommes. Dans la légende de Jésus selon les Musulmans sunnites, Jésus ne souffre pas, n'est pas crucifié."

A long and elaborate study on the Abbot Joachim is important, in a variety of ways, amongst others as showing Renan at work upon the manuscripts of the Imperial Library, for the task of inquiring into the information which that institution possessed about this enigmatic personage was confided to him in 1852, while he was still employed there. The first conclusion which he came to was that the Abbot Joachim only wrote three books, one on the agreement of the New and Old Testaments, one an exposition of the Apocalypse, and one entitled *Le psaltérion décacorde*, together with certain letters or treatises of minor importance. The second was that what made the Abbot Joachim a conspicuous figure in Middle Age history was that the extreme school of the Franciscans, the group which thought that most of their brethren in the second generation had fallen away from the idea of their founder (to take the Sermon on the Mount literally as the law of life, and by no means only to found a new order), adopted the Calabrian Abbot and his views as a sort of battle-flag. The members of that group considered in their heart of hearts that St. Francis was not only equal to Christ, but a little superior to him, as being more devoted to poverty. It did not become very

important till Giovanni Borelli, known as John of Parma, became the head of all the Franciscans in 1247, twenty-one years after the death of St. Francis. He went all lengths with the extreme section, and it gradually became very influential indeed. The next question which Renan examines is whether there ever was a book called *The Eternal Gospel*, written either by Joachim or by some one else. He came to the conclusion that *The Eternal Gospel* designated, in the opinion of the thirteenth century, a doctrine only vaguely expressed in the writings of the Abbot Joachim, the cardinal tenet of which was that the Gospel of Christ was to be succeeded by a third and final Gospel, the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. At the same time he lays it down that it would be quite a mistake to consider there never had been such a book as *The Eternal Gospel*, as there certainly never was such a book as the much-talked-of *De tribus impostoribus*. Sometimes the phrase *The Eternal Gospel* was used to describe the principal works of Joachim taken together, sometimes to describe a book called *Introduction to the Eternal Gospel*, composed, or at least published, by a most ardent member of the Franciscan group above mentioned, called Gérard of Borgo San-Donnino, in 1254, which has been lost, but the doctrines of which we know from

the Acts of the Assembly at Anagni, which condemned them.

Gérard and most of the group were real saints, but extremely free in their belief, attaching quite as much importance to the ideas of Joachim, and to their own interpretations of them, as to the teaching of the Church and the authority of the Bible. They thought that the Father had reigned in the Old Testament, that the Son had reigned up to 1200, but that then the spirit of life had left the two Testaments for the Eternal Gospel, and that, from 1260 onwards to the end of time, the Holy Ghost was to reign. Renan thinks that this movement was a most formidable one, and that it might very easily have ended in the foundation of a new Franciscan religion, which might have replaced Christianity in the West. Unluckily for the success of the doctrine, it extended from Italy up the Rhone and the Saône into the centre of France, took a considerable hold in Champagne, and Gérard of Borgo San-Donnino, in an evil hour for himself, chose Paris, of all places, for the publication of his work.

Here he encountered the violent opposition of the University, which was assisted by the Bishop of the diocese, who denounced Gérard's work to Pope Alexander IV., who named a

commission to inquire into it, and by that commission it was condemned. The head of the Franciscan Order was obliged to abdicate, Gérard was done to death, and the movement, as a serious uprising, collapsed, though it lingered long, and showed itself in many ways and places, giving rise to frightful persecutions in the North of Italy, the South of France, and elsewhere. The Tertiaries of St. Francis were burnt by the thousand. Some of the early reformers revived the interest in the Abbot Joachim, and in the year 1600 a Protestant author brought together all the passages in which he and his followers had favoured the doctrines or antipathies of his own co-religionists: "On ne peut imaginer un concert plus bizarre de malédictions!" It might be commended to the study of those who believe the Middle Ages to have been exclusively the Ages of Faith.

Horrible as the methods were by which the Joachimite movement was suppressed, Renan does not think that these good sectaries could have effected much for real progress. Already, as early as their first condemnation in 1255, it had become clear that real progress must come from above, not from below; from the reason, not from the imagination; from good

sense, not from enthusiasm; from level-headed men, not from *illuminati*, who tried to arrive at the secrets of destiny by strange chimeras, texts whose meanings they did not understand, and absurd Apocalyptic calculations.

"Christine de Stommeln, a monastic idyll of the thirteenth century," is, in the main, a study in morbid pathology bodily and mental, but contains a good deal that is valuable, as throwing light upon that most remarkable period, soon to be succeeded by dulness and rigidity all over Europe in the fourteenth, and, save in Italy, in the fifteenth century also. Further, it is curious, in that the hero of the tale was a young Swedish Dominican, who passed much of his life either on the mainland of his own country or on the island of Gothland, neither of which usually comes much into our thoughts when we turn towards the religious history of the Middle Ages. In addition to all this, the love-story, for in essentials it is a love-story, though not one of the ordinary kind, has its strange, weird, northern charm. The Loffoden Isles, says Renan, remembering his experiences of 1870, the gloomy Archipelago of Tromsöe, are at moments as beautiful as Ischia and Capri. Their hours of beauty are infinitely rarer, but when those hours come we feel that there

is in the world only one sun, one sea, one sky.

A brief paper of very early date, 1857, is a friendly account of a work upon Christian art in Italy by Athanase Coquerel the younger, already mentioned, who was then beginning those labours, as a Protestant Liberal preacher, which gave him between 1860 and 1870 so good a position amongst intelligent Frenchmen. It contains *inter alia* some very true criticism of that extremely mistaken school of artists who introduce realism into subjects which have been consecrated by the tradition of ages, and paint Christ like a Syrian artisan or peasant of our own day.

In this volume are also reprinted three careful articles belonging to the years 1860 and 1867, upon the *Port Royal* of M. Sainte-Beuve. Very important is page 461, in which Renan shows how very much more was done by early French Protestantism for the historical and philological sciences than ever was done by Port Royal. There is a silly phrase, I know not by whom invented, which one sometimes hears used in England about Renan, that he was a *Voltaire sucré*. God forbid that we should ever be forgetful of the good that Voltaire did for the world in which he lived—

good mixed, no doubt, with a great amount of evil; but if ever the minds of two very great prose writers belonging to the same country, and living at no very great distance of time from each other, were unlike, those two minds were those of Voltaire and Renan. Renan had the genius of history, the power of divining the distant past and making it live before us in a quite astonishing manner; Voltaire dealing with the distant past was seldom indeed happily inspired. Well does Renan say of him, page 462 of this book: "Il a fait plus de tort aux études historiques qu'une invasion de barbares."

Very notable too is all Renan says on Port Royal as a school of character, and his remarks on page 488 about the Saints as a living testimony to the transcendent nature of man.

The next letter I can find, one dated from the Collège de France on 22nd November 1884, gave me but an indifferent account of Renan's health. Walking had become difficult to him; but all the more had he devoted himself to his work. His *History of Israel* was advancing rapidly, and two volumes were almost ready for the press. In the same letter was announced a new project from which he was to derive much pleasure and advantage. In the month of

August he had returned to his native town of Tréguier, which he had not seen for forty years. He had been received with so much cordiality that he determined to pass part of every year in Brittany, and he took accordingly, for a series of years, a house close to the sea in the neighbourhood of Lannion. The same letter informs me that he had been elected President of the Asiatic Society of Paris, as a successor to M. Adolphe Régnier, who had himself succeeded M. Jules Mohl so well known to so many Englishmen.

A letter of March 1885 brought pleasant news of Madame Renan's evenings at the Collège de France. They continued some of the traditions of those which Madame Mohl, of whom Mrs. Simpson has preserved so full a record, used to have at No. 120 Rue du Bac. It was she who said that she should like to die on a Saturday, that she might have one Friday more.

At this time Renan was writing his *Discours* for the reception of M. F. de Lesseps at the French Academy; but the distractions of business and society were too great for more consecutive labour, and the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* was sound asleep, not to wake again till its author reached his new Breton home.

Ere long the *Discours* just mentioned arrived

on the Nilgiris, as did that of M. de Lesseps, and very remarkable I thought both.

It is, however, sad to read now poor Lesseps's brief but striking Address, and to think how well he has illustrated the saying of the wise Greek, "Call no man happy before his death!" He quoted then, with admirable effect, the Arabian proverb, "*Les chiens aboient; la caravane passe*," and added "*J'ai passé*."

Not the least memorable words which Renan addressed to him in reply were the following, which will often come back, I think, to the minds of all ex-kings, and of some kings, who read them :—

"En fait vous avez été roi, vous avez eu les avantages de la souveraineté, vous avez appris ce qu'elle apprend, l'indulgence, la pitié, le pardon, le dédain."

The address is full of noticeable things; observe especially the passage on the two great mistakes of the Greeks, their Rhetoric and their Poetics.

My next tidings were from the new Breton home, Rosmapamon in the Côtes du Nord, close to the sea, but among pleasant woods, where life presented a great contrast to the locomotive rush of the capital, and where solitude, repose, and freedom from interruption enabled Renan to

push on his great history and to work also at the *Prêtre de Némi*.

Another letter, still from Brittany, in the late autumn, announced the almost immediate arrival of the book just named, which duly appeared, and I read it, as I had done its two predecessors *Caliban* and *L'Eau de Jouvence*. In the collected edition of these philosophical dramas, published in 1888, there is a Preface which explains their author's drift in publishing them. He shows, no doubt correctly, that the time for systematic works on philosophy is past, anyhow for our generation. Whether it will return, when we know more of the facts of the universe, may be an open question; but certainly it is true that, in discussing these high matters now, all sorts of side-lights and "diagonal influences" must be taken account of, which do not fit well into a systematic treatise; and very likely the method of dialogue is the best that can be adopted. I daresay there are many people who find the dramas, in which Renan has tried to embody his idea, especially attractive; but to me, though I see of course their great ability, they appeal much less than his other writings.

The introduction to the *Prêtre de Némi* was more interesting to me than the drama

itself. It was in it that Renan used the phrase which I have taken as the motto of this book: "J'ai tout critiqué et quoi qu'on en dise j'ai tout maintenu"; and added a little lower down: "Notre critique a plus fait pour la conservation de la religion que toutes les apologies."

Early in 1886 came the little prose dramatic composition written for the Victor Hugo celebration, and an account of its having been admirably declaimed by the actors of the Comédie Française. More interesting to me than it were, however, the admirable articles which he published about this time in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on *Les Origines de la Bible.* These were not portions of his history of the people of Israel, but subsidiary studies lying parallel to and connected with it. The same letter promised me a visit at Madras from Mr. James Darmesteter, which, alas! never took place, and I was not fated to meet him till he appeared in London at the concluding dinner of the Orientalist Congress last September, when Count de Gubernatis so happily said of him, "Ha cercato la poesia in Inghilterra e l' ha sposato." A little later, news came from Brittany that the first volume of the *History of Israel* would probably be published in a year and a half, which it actually was, and that the rest of

the work would follow rapidly. There was an account, too, of a pleasant little journey in Switzerland, in the interval between Paris and the Breton home.

A letter, a little later in the autumn, the last I received in India, was occupied chiefly with advice about my homeward journey, which was to take me to Jerusalem and other places very familiar to the writer; but brought also excellent news of Renan's physical condition and of his continued literary activity.

I found him when I passed through Paris on my way back from India, in the end of February 1887, in his house at the Collège de France hardly at all changed, and certainly not perceptibly weaker than he had been before I went to the East. Our talk ranged over a great variety of subjects—Madame Mohl, and a life of her which had then just been published; Dean Stanley, for whom he had always a great regard; the then Bishop of Durham's book on Clement of Rome, which he praised very highly; his own life in Brittany; our troubles in Ireland, and much else.

A little later I received from him the volume entitled *Discours et Conférences*, which contains a number of very important pieces. To some of these I have already alluded, as for instance

his *Discours*, when he succeeded Claude Bernard at the Académie Française, his reply to Cherbuliez and to Lesseps, as well as his Address at the Lycée Louis le Grand. Another group is composed of short speeches, good of their kind, but of secondary importance. Of these, perhaps, one delivered at Quimper, in which he gives an account of a mole-catcher of his name, is the most amusing. "Moi aussi," he said, "j'ai été bon taupier; j'ai détruit quelques bêtes souterraines assez malfaisantes."

The second piece, called *Lettre à un ami d'Allemagne*, contains much admirable, though somewhat acrid, criticism upon the state of things in Germany which followed, as compared with that which might have followed, the war of 1870. I very much prefer it to the elaborate lecture, *Qu'est ce qu'une Nation?* which was delivered in 1882 at the Sorbonne, and is reprinted in the same volume. This last is an argument in favour of settling questions of nationality by *plébiscite*, and though it is full of sensible observations, it is overshadowed throughout by a reflection which must occur to every reader who is not a Frenchman: "What a pity that those admirable maxims did not find favour with Louis XIV. and with Napoleon I." It is, alas, too late to settle the great debate between

France and Germany by philosophical considerations.

The answer to M. Pasteur's Address, delivered in April 1882 at the Académie Française, is not surpassed as a composition by anything which Renan ever wrote. Most remarkable throughout, it was specially interesting to me from the expression it contained of its author's matured view of Comte, about whom and whose ideas I had heard him speak with some impatience, but never fully. I have alluded already to the delightful account of Littré which it also contains.

The long *Rapport sur les prix de Vertu*, read on the 4th of August 1881, is full of interesting anecdotes. It is from it that I take the following much-needed remarks upon the hateful school of novelists who have done so much to disgrace their country in recent years:—

"On dirait, en lisant les œuvres d'imagination de nos jours, qu'il n'y a que le mal et le laid qui soient des réalités. Quand donc nous fera-t-on aussi le roman réaliste du bien? Le bien est tout aussi réel que le mal; les dossiers que vous m'avez chargé de lire renferment autant de vérité que les abominables peintures dont malheureusement nous ne pouvons contester l'exactitude. Emmeline Nadaud existe

aussi bien que telle heroïne pervertie de tel roman pris sur nature. Qui nous fera un jour le tableau du bien à Paris? Qui nous dira la lutte de tant de vertus pauvres, de tant de mères admirables, de sœurs dévouées? Avons-nous donc tant d'intérêt à prouver que le monde où nous vivons est entièrement pervers? Non, grâce à la vertu, la Providence se justifie; le pessimisme ne peut citer que quelques cas bien rares d'êtres pour lesquels l'existence n'ait pas été un bien. Un dessein d'amour éclate dans l'univers; malgré ses immenses défauts, ce monde reste après tout une œuvre de bonté infinie."

I am tempted to put side by side with this a passage from the Preface to Mrs. Craven's *Life of Lady Georgiana Fullerton*:—

"Dès ma jeunesse (et cette bonne fortune m'a suivie plus tard), il m'a été donné de rencontrer des êtres dignes de toute la tendresse, de toute l'admiration et de tout le respect qu'il faut éprouver ensemble pour que le cœur soit pleinement satisfait. Peu de vies, sans doute (du moins c'est le petit nombre), sont totalement privées de rencontres semblables; je puis toutefois, à cet égard, regarder la mienne comme privilégiée, et c'est pourquoi je ne saurais m'associer aux pessimistes qui, en prétendant les

peindre d'après nature, font des tableaux, dont on pourrait être tenté de conclure que la pureté, la piété, la noblesse et l'honneur n'ont jamais eu, ou n'ont plus ici-bas, de personnification vivante !"

Might they not have changed manuscripts?

Very bright and very wise are many of Renan's words in an Address to the Students' Association. He began by being very festive indeed—so festive that rigorists might frown; but when he had got hold of his audience, and could venture to speak seriously, what good advice he gave!—

"Soyez toujours de très honnêtes gens. Vous ne pourriez pas bien travailler sans cela. Il me semble qu'on ne saurait bien travailler, ni bien s'amuser, que si on est un honnête homme. La gaieté de la conscience suppose une bonne vie. Il y a des sujets délicats; il est convenu qu'on n'en parle pas. Mais vous me témoignez tant de confiance que je vous dirai tout ce que je pense. Ne profanez jamais l'amour; c'est la chose la plus sacrée du monde; la vie de l'humanité, c'est-à-dire de la plus haute réalité qu'il y ait, en dépend. Regardez comme une lâcheté de trahir la femme qui vous a ouvert pour un moment le paradis de l'idéal; tenez pour le plus grand des crimes de vous exposer

aux malédictions futures d'un être qui vous devrait la vie et qui, par votre faute peut-être, serait voué au mal. Vous êtes des hommes d'honneur ; regardez cet acte, qu'on traite avec tant de légèreté, comme un acte abominable. Mon opinion est que la règle morale et légale du mariage sera changée. La vieille loi romaine et chrétienne paraîtra un jour trop exclusive, trop étroite. Mais il y a une vérité qui sera éternelle, c'est que des relations des deux sexes résultent des obligations sacrées, et que le premier des devoirs humains est de s'interdire, dans l'acte le plus gros de conséquence pour l'avenir du monde, une coupable étourderie."

A few of his sterner friends and a very large number of his enemies have had and will have a great deal to say about a certain tone of irony passing at times into something very like frivolity, which appears at widely distant intervals in his later work. His enemies, of course, cannot be blamed for using any weapon that comes to hand against a man whose teaching, even in his gravest moments, they believe to have been thoroughly mischievous ; but his sterner friends may be reminded, in the first place, that he was by profession a philologist, not a professor of either morals or theology. If he slipped now

and then into turns of expression or veins of thought which were more like Menage than Fénelon, the wonder was not so much that he did so occasionally, as that, inheriting all the traditions of French scholars, he kept himself usually so far above a *Gaulois* atmosphere. Without his long clerical training he might very probably have been like most of his fellow-citizens. So much may be conceded; but let no one say that things could be said or written without blame by illustrious personages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because the general tone of society was then far more *Gaulois* than it is now. Let him who is disposed to do so turn to the conversations recorded in that astounding journal of the Goncourts, and then say if anything can be made of that argument. The honestest course seems to me to be frankly to admit that these blemishes exist; but that, when they are compared with the enormous mass of Renan's grave and great work, they appear utterly insignificant. I think he brought to the surface and shaped into graceful forms a hundred tons of the purest gold. If in doing so he brought up a hundred ounces of lead and shaped it into ugly forms, the fact appears to me "colossally unimportant."

If he had been *bien pensant* and had had a

confessor, the severest penance imposed upon him, even for writing the *Abbesse de Jouarre*, would have been, I think, to translate into all the dead languages with which he was acquainted, his own essay on the Theology of Béranger, which is published in his *Questions Contemporaines*, and to which all the offended virtue of his sterner friends and all the wrath of his enemies could add nothing. He criticised in it, to perfection, the very faults into which he fell, on rare occasions, near the end of his career, as much from a morbid desire not to pose as better than other men as from any other cause. Every one, who knows anything about him at all, knows that his conduct from birth to death was simply that of a saint—a saint whose opinions may have been as detestable as possible, but who, even if judged by the teachings of the Galilean Lake, was still a saint.

A lecture on the original identity and gradual separation of Judaism and Christianity, addressed to a Jewish audience, puts together in a bright and attractive form some of the leading ideas of the *Origines du Christianisme*. It contains at page 339 an amusing anecdote of Dr. Pusey, who once paid a visit to Renan, and assured him that the *Thesaurus* of Gesenius was a very dangerous book! sending him next day a letter of more

than ten pages, which he religiously preserved, to try to convince him that the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was a prophecy of Christ. Another lecture on Judaism, considered as a race and a religion, is even more interesting. Renan is persuaded that a very large number of persons who are now known as Jews never had a Palestinian ancestor. He considers that from the Fall of Jerusalem to the time of Alexander, and indeed, in some places, to a much later date, as late even as the days of Hadrian, Judaism was an open religion, gaining converts in very large numbers amongst people who had not a drop of Semitic blood. There is, I suppose, no doubt that great numbers of Jews in Southern Russia and the adjoining countries are really of Slav or Tartar descent, for the kingdom of the Khazars adopted Judaism nearly as late as the time of Charlemagne. A third lecture on Islamism and science is full of little-known matter. It brings out particularly well the curious mistake which is made when we talk of Arabian science. The Arab is, in his passion for the niceties of his language, one of the most literary, but in his determination not to inquire into the causes of any natural phenomenon, one of the least scientific of human beings. The brilliant reign of the Abbassides at Bagdad derived its glory

from the constant slipping back of the Caliphs into Sassanide and Persian ways, as remote as possible from Arabian or Islamite ideas.

A Metaphysical Society on precisely the same lines as that which, a few years ago, gathered Cardinal Manning, Professor Huxley, the Duke of Argyll, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. James Martineau, Mr. Greg, and so many more very dissimilar thinkers around the same table, flourished under their shade.

CHAPTER VIII

In the autumn of 1887 I returned to Palestine, landing at Beyrouth and passing down through Phœnicia to the foot of Mount Carmel, where I spent the winter and spring, buried in the studies and interests suggested by the country. One of the first parcels which I opened on reaching Haïfa contained Volume I. of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*, which Renan had despatched to meet me there. The third volume did not appear until 1891; but it may not be inconvenient if I say here what I have got to say about the whole book.

The Preface to the first volume is a careful and beautifully-written paper, in which the preeminent position of Hebrew, Greek, and Roman history is admirably set forth. If one of them can be called providential, all must be called so; each is, in a sense, miraculous. Greece founded "l'humanisme rationnel et progressif"; but

its religion was babyish. It cared nothing for the weak, and felt no want of a just God. Hebrew literature from the ninth century B.C., that is, from the first appearance of the prophets, was, on the other hand, filled to overflowing with the passion of justice. To these fierce defenders of what they thought the right, a world in which justice did not reign was an absurd world, a world which ought not to exist at all.

The function of Rome was quite different. Rome, the embodiment of strength, levelled the barriers which would otherwise have made it impossible for the ideas that had sprung up in Greece and Palestine to unite and to conquer the world. Happy will be the man, says our author, to whose lot it shall fall to write the history of Greece after having given sixty years to its study. Although, however, he would himself have liked to have had a second life to accomplish that work, he did not regret that he had given the only one he could dispose of, to writing the history of the race which had created religion, and more especially the religion which, perhaps not exactly in any of its present forms, but still in its essential features, as taught at the Well of Samaria, Renan believed to be not only good for this planet but for the whole universe—*La Religion absolue*. Very wise are his remarks

on the folly of expecting accurate accounts of the men and circumstances of the most remote times. There is no certainty, or anything like certainty, in Hebrew history before the days of David. The duty of the historian of early Israel is not to say, "This or that happened," but to say, after long and careful study, "I think it is probable that something like this or that happened." The margin of his page must be sown with marks of interrogation.

After some observations on the string of absurdities which used to be taught as the earliest Roman history, and after calling the attention of the reader to the writings of Kuenen, Wellhausen, Stade, and others, Renan concludes by some general remarks.

"The progress of reason has been fatal only to false gods; the true God of the universe, the only God, the God whom one adores by doing a good action, by searching out a truth or by giving wise counsel to men, is established for all eternity. It is the certainty that I have served this good cause in my own way, in spite of all sort of defects, which inspires me with absolute confidence in the Divine goodness; it is the conviction that this book will be useful to religious progress which has made me love it." In some such terms as these does this

destroyer commence his survey of the early history of Israel!

The first chapter of the text begins with a brief explanation of his views as to the origin of the human race. He thinks that the passage from animality to humanity was not effected in a single place at the same time, but in various places, perhaps simultaneously, perhaps successively. The appearance of the varieties of man and of the various families of languages were separated by long periods, so that all the members of the same race had by no means necessarily the same language. The language and the institutions, which grew up, in each linguistic centre, he considers to have been much more important in moulding national character than mere ties of blood.

Then follows a description of the earliest ancestors of the human race as he conceives them, and very unpleasant people they must have been. Next we are introduced to the communities of men settled six or seven thousand years ago on the alluvial plains bordering great rivers, the Ganges, the Tigris, or the Nile—communities not unlike those of the bees and ants. It was only 2000 years B.C. that the Aryans and Semites first made their appearance,

very inferior in material civilisation to the communities just mentioned, but possessing germs of far higher things than they. The Aryan was monogamous, the Semite polygamous; the Aryan polytheist, the Semite monotheist. The spirit of their languages was essentially different, especially in all that relates to the verb, and the most important consequences, for their whole mode of thought, resulted from this difference. Renan agrees with those who believe that, about 2000 years B.C., the chief seat of the Aryans was Afghanistan, and the chief seat of the Semites Arabia. From that country the last-named migrated into Syria, overpowering the Anakim and other races. The most valuable document for the study of the early Semitic period is the Book of Genesis, considered not as an historical work, but as an idealised representation of an age which really did exist. It should be used in the way in which the poems of Homer are used by rational people. The general truthfulness of its representations is confirmed by the Book of Job, by the scenes depicted in the grottoes of Beni-Hassan in Egypt, and above all by the life of the Arabs as it still exists. There follows a picture of the early Semitic tribal life, resembling, in most details, the ordinary idea of it.

The third chapter treats of the religious vocation of the Semites in their nomad state. The promises made to Abraham are mythical only in form. Abraham, taken as the representative of the earliest Semitic life, is the religious ancestor of all peoples. The Semite nomad believed that he lived in the midst of a world surrounded and governed by the Elohim, myriads of active spirits inseparable from each other, and not, like the gods of the Aryans, possessing proper names; but, on the contrary, so closely united that Elohim, the plural of Eloh, is construed with a verb in the singular. Elohim is everywhere; the breath of Elohim is the life of all things. From that idea arose the habit of speaking of Elohim by the third personal pronoun He, Him. Certainly this Elohim—the spirits conceived together—was a long way from being the just God of the prophets; but we can see how he or they rose to this position, while Varuna, Zeus, Diespiter never succeeded in doing anything of the kind. The Semite overtaken by a storm invoked the Elohim; he did the same in battle and in disease. The Aryan under those various circumstances invoked different gods, Poseidon or a synonym at sea, Ares or Mars in battle, and so forth.

All religious conceptions remained, it need hardly be said, very vague in these early ages, but we see from the first that a greater simplicity of thought characterised the religion of the Semites as compared with that of the Aryans. Note, too, that the wandering life of many of their tribes did not lend itself to a religion of a complicated kind. Beasts of burden were few, the difficulties of transport great, and so the sacred objects were obliged to be small, insignificant teraphim, or other things easily carried about. The Semite had hardly any mythology. Elohim did everything. He had no word in the least like the Aryan *div*, the brilliancy of the sky, whence Dies, Divus, Deva, Jupiter, and so much else.

With the exception of the teraphim and such portable *articles de dévotion*, the only objects, to which the nomad Semitic tribes seem to have attached any religious significance, were the rough stones which they set up and anointed with oil. They had the idea of sacrifice, the idea that the Elohim required to be propitiated, or, if already favourably disposed, kept so by giving them things which they liked, such things being usually those which the sacrificers themselves particularly fancied. This illusion was one through which it appears that all mankind

had to pass in developing out of the stage of mere animality, through what now seems to us a stage of extreme folly into that of childhood, from which last the race has by no means yet emerged. The prophets in the eighth century B.C. were the first to attack the mischievous habit of sacrifice, as well as that of fasting—coming, that is, before the Elohim in so miserable a guise that they should not think of wishing to harm people who, arrayed in sackcloth and ashes, already looked so wretched. No one ever denounced those venerable unwisdoms in stronger language than did Isaiah, and yet they are still extremely vigorous in some circles.

The Semite was the least metaphysical of the higher races, as the Aryan was the most metaphysical. His religion was a sort of Deism, without any philosophy save resignation to the will of a Supreme Being, gradually compounded from the fusion of the Elohim. The long period, during which the Beni-Israel led the nomad life, left the most profound traces in the feelings of the people. The Aryan Golden Age was a dream of poets and poetical thinkers, turning towards the past; but the Semitic Golden Age was no dream; it was a recurrence in thought to something which had actually been experienced by their forefathers, the "life

of the Tent." Hence it came about that those who continued to lead that life in days of comparative civilisation, as, for instance, the Rechabites, were treated with great respect by that section of the people whose sentiments found a voice in the prophets.

The Semitic nomads, wandering from Arabia to the river Euphrates, became powerfully influenced by Babylonia and the comparatively imposing material civilisation which they found there. They hardly seem to have got as far as Nineveh, but remained generally in the part of Mesopotamia known as Padanaram, the principal centres of which were Ḥarran and Edessa. This country was an annex of Assyria, a sort of Aramaic Babylonia. Here they found the Chaldean legends in a shape in which they commended themselves to their intelligences. They learnt to speak of Havva, "she who gives life," Eve, and of the mythical king of Ur, Father Orham—Abraham, the Orchamus of Ovid. The legends about them, about the Deluge, about Nimrod, and much else, gradually got worn down in the life of the Tent, lost much of the extravagance which they had in their old Chaldean form, and took the shape we find in the first twelve chapters of Genesis, in which, as we shall see later, two different compilations of

legend have been fused into a single text. The fact that portions of these chapters have been used, by ignorant expositors, to hamper the progress of science, ought not to make us forget that, in their day, they were a relatively rational way of explaining the world in which those who conceived them found themselves living. Wandering shepherds did not invent these legends, but they made their success. They would never have conquered the world in the exuberant form in which they are recorded in the Assyrian inscriptions. It was their simplification by the nomad Semites, to whom the art of writing was unknown, which gave them their immense power.

A branch of the Semitic nomads crossing the river Euphrates, and obtaining thence the name of Ibrim, "those who had passed the river," advanced into the country of Terach or Trachonitis, and thence as far as the South of Palestine, which was not yet fully occupied by their cousins the Canaanites. It is very probable that amongst these Ibrim were the ancestors of other tribes than those which we know as Hebrew, the Edomites and Moabites for example, and some of these tribes may have been in the region east of the Jordan, before the time when the Ibrim came into it. All this is exceedingly

uncertain ; but assuredly in the earliest times there was a close connection between the Ibrim and some other tribes to which we find their descendants, in a later day, extremely hostile. Even when the Book of Ruth was composed, there does not seem to have been any difference of religion between the Ibrim and the Moabites. With the Canaanites, on the other hand, the Ibrim seem from the first to have had less intimate relations.

All sorts of divisions, combinations, and changes, about which we can only guess, took place amongst these Semitic tribes. Gradually we see a section or company disengaged from the others, called Beni-Israel, drawn perhaps into particularly close connection by religious feeling, possibly by repugnance to the human sacrifices practised around them, for we find that they gloried particularly in their supposed descent from Abraham, whom tradition represented as having substituted an animal for a human sacrifice.

Two places in Palestine are peculiarly connected with the dim earlier recollections of the Beni-Israel and of the closely-related sept of the Beni-Joseph. These are Hebron and Sichem, but as to the wanderings or series of wanderings which took their ancestors from beyond the

Euphrates to the centre of Palestine and the edge of the Egyptian desert, we really know nothing, while the confusion is made worse confounded by stories being told of the lives of persons which, in so far as they had any foundation at all, were connected with the history not of persons but of clans. That, however, the early life of these people was something like the life described in the Book of Genesis, putting aside obviously mythical narrations, like the appearance of the Elohim in the guise of human beings, may be taken as pretty certain.

The sixth chapter deals with the name of Jahveh, corrupted in the seventeenth century into the quite incorrect form Jehovah. Renan explains that it is possible that this mysterious word may have been adopted by the nomads from Padanaram, where it seems to have been used as that of the God who spoke in the thunder. This is, however, extremely doubtful, and it is just as likely that Jahveh was originally the local God of Sinai whose name became used as a synonym for Elohim, then superseded Elohim, and lastly gave way again, if not to the old form, at least to the old idea of a supreme being not belonging to any particular district, and not more connected with the thunder than with any other natural phenomenon.

Very remarkable is the last page of the seventh chapter in its vigorous description of the peculiarities of the Hebrew language—"unfitted for the expression of philosophical thought, of scientific results, or of doubt. The letters of its books are counted, but they are letters of fire; its language says little, but it hammers out what it does say upon an anvil." It is well for mankind that it was destined to be mated with the Greek, a seven-stringed lyre able to vibrate in harmony with every conceivable mood of the human spirit.

The ninth chapter contains a full description of the religion of the Beni-Israel, of the origin of circumcision, of the idea of the Refaïm or Shades cherished by the common people, but to which no countenance was given by the sages who believed that God only was immortal, that man had his day, long or short, and received all his recompense upon this earth.

Renan considers that the Beni-Israel migrated into Egypt in two divisions. The first immigrants who went thither were, he thinks, attracted by the Hyksos whom he believes to have been Semites. He conceives the first migration to have been that of the Beni-Joseph, and that they subsequently invited some of their brethren to join them. The only thing,

however, which he treats as certain in all this is, that the Israelites entered Egypt under a dynasty favourable to and left it under a dynasty hostile to the Semites. He supposes their stay in Egypt to have been about a hundred years, and considers that the old religion of the Tent was much corrupted there. From Egypt came the Ark, which in the Egyptian ritual was a little closed chapel supported on a boat. The boat disappeared eventually among the Beni-Israel, and the whole took the form of a large chest covered by two Sphinxes looking at each other and folding their wings together, so as to make a sort of throne for the deity. In the popular language of the Israelites the Sphinx was called a Cherub, and sitting between the Sphinxes or Cherubs became the usual attitude of the National God, when the idolatrous spirit of Egypt had so far corrupted the primeval faith, and had created a National God instead of a God of the Universe. The shew-bread and the brazen Serpent also came from Egypt, as did the Levite whose title means an adherent, a stranger added to the clan. He was probably for the most part an Egyptian familiar with the ritual. The patriarchal Cohen or priest was quite a different personage. Every head of a family was a Cohen.

Renan's views about the Exodus are pretty much those which are generally held by persons who consider that the same canons of criticism should be applied to all primeval histories. He did not know what to think about Moses, and no wonder, seeing that we have no documents to go upon, earlier than those composed some four or five centuries after the latest date which can be assigned to that famous person. He seems to have been a Levite. Most Levites as we have seen, Renan thinks, were Egyptians whose co-operation was necessary for those portions of Egyptian worship which the Beni-Israel borrowed; but Moses was very probably a man of mixed race, for he seems to have been connected with the Midianites and Kenites, both Semitic tribes.

The Red Sea in those days extended far beyond Suez. Even Clysma, the port of embarkation for India in the Middle Ages, was a couple of leagues from that town. The Israelites must have crossed the lagoon somewhere between Suez and the Bitter Lakes at a possible, but nevertheless very dangerous spot. Renan believes the wandering in the Sinaitic desert to have been much shorter than is usually supposed, and that the desert—even at that time a terrible wilderness—was not quite so destitute

of vegetation as it is now. On page 193 he notices the mention of the Sinaitic desert in the most ancient Hebrew poetry which we possess, in the Song of Deborah and in Deuteronomy xxxiii. 2—compositions long prior to the Book known as Exodus. Returning to the discussion of the word Jahveh, he points out that the fact of Sinai and not Hermon having been made the Olympus of Israel shows the deep impression which the former mountain had made on the mind of the people. If he is right in considering that the length of time spent in the desert was only a year or eighteen months—and assuredly all old numbers are much exaggerated—never did so short a period produce such immense effects.

After their sojourn in the Wilderness, the Beni-Israel passed into the country east of the Jordan, and obtained considerable military successes there, very possibly from the fact that, having come from Egypt and having been in contact with a superior civilisation in the Valley of the Nile, they had better weapons than the tribes whom they had to meet. They seem to have defeated at various times the Amorites, the people of Bashan, and the Midianites.

In the Trans-Jordanic districts they remained a long time, and made them the base of their

operations against the regions on the western side of the river. We must not think of these operations as of a regular conquest, misled by the Book of Joshua, one of the least historical portions of the Bible. Rather must we think of them as raids, some important, like that which established the tribe of Judah in the South, many unimportant. There must, too, have been a long process of infiltration into the Cis-Jordanic districts, not in the nature of conquests at all, but rather of successive immigrations. For ages after the period of the so-called conquest we find Canaanites[1] and the Beni-Israel living side by side. The Canaanites, who Renan thinks were in some respects more like the Carthaginians than the Phœnicians, occupied a very low level of civilisation. Their kings were small potentates ruling a few square miles, at the most, from some central hamlet, who could make very little resistance to the invaders, except on the plains where the Beni-Israel had

[1] Nothing strikes the traveller in Palestine more than the strange way in which the Canaanites have remained in the land whence the Beni-Israel have, save in the shape of scattered immigrants, vanished away. Within a few hundred yards of one of the absolutely certain sites in Palestine, a not very numerous class, the Well at Nazareth where the Blessed Virgin must have gone every day to draw water, is a shrine called after some Mussulman Saint, as likely a local robber as not. It is nothing more nor less than the old High Place of the Canaanites which was there before Judaism, before Christianity, before Islam.

nothing to oppose to the war-chariots which the Canaanites of the lowland possessed. No doubt many atrocities were committed during the progress of the settlement of the new-comers in Palestine; neither side is likely to have been at all merciful to its opponents; but we may well hope that those who compiled the Book of Joshua, in long after ages, attributed, in their theocratic zeal, many horrors to their ancestors which were never committed. A terrible misfortune has been the loss of the book known as that of Jashar or the Wars of Jahveh, which would have given us a much better idea of the heroic age of the Beni-Israel than any which we can now obtain.

Ever since they left Egypt the Beni-Israel had been becoming less of a tribe and more of a nation, and may henceforward be thought of as such. The tribal God who had superseded the old Elohim became a National God, and was worshipped sometimes as a golden calf, sometimes under the form of a serpent, possibly even under that of the winged disk so common in Egypt, and found on every Phœnician monument. Side by side with Jahveh, however, the new-comers worshipped the gods of their new homes, Baal, Astarte, and others. It was only gradually and after tremendous struggles, that

Jahveh became thought of as the only God whom an Israelite ought to worship. Even David, especially attached as he was to the worship of Jahveh, regretted that, on passing beyond Jordan, he would have to worship other gods.

After a chapter devoted to the method by which those who consulted the oracle of Jahveh proceeded, a subject rendered almost hopelessly obscure by the fact that even as far back as the fifth century B.C. no one knew very clearly what the Ephod or the Urim and Thummim really were, Renan passes on to describe the state of society in Palestine during the period known as that of the Judges, and of which we have a series of sketches in the extremely interesting book known by that name. There was still nothing like a large national life. The tribe of Judah is hardly mentioned in the Judges at all. It was a time of isolated wars, isolated aggressions, isolated resistances. The Judges were dictators selected for some momentary purpose, and the heads of small confederations which dissolved when the work of aggression or resistance was over. Here and there we see attempts to introduce something like royalty, attempts like that which afterwards more or less succeeded in the case of Saul. Some families

adored Jahveh, some Baal, while some, like that of Gideon, appear to have paid great respect to both.

The stories of Deborah, of Abimelech, of Jephthah, of Samson the legendary hero of Dan, the Antar of the Israelites, are admirably told. So are the intestine wars of the tribes, the desperate attack on the tribe of Benjamin, the raid of the Danites upon the people of Laish, and much else. Specially interesting are the pages from 366 to 372 on the general character, of this period, in which it is compared with the state of Greece during the age represented by the *Odyssey*, Boaz being a sort of Israelitic Alcinoüs, Nausicaa a Grecian Ruth.

Up to this time all in the history of Israel is to the last degree uncertain. About 1100 B.C. we begin to get a little more light, and can follow the thread of affairs, which hitherto has been perpetually breaking and leaving us in perplexity. Several tendencies mark this epoch. One is the desire to have some more stable and general direction of national life than the fitful dictatorships which characterise the age of the Judges. That tendency resulted in the peasant royalty of Saul. Another tendency was to attribute greater importance than hitherto to the position of the *Nabi* or prophet. He was

originally a mere sorcerer, a person to whom recourse was had when a she-ass or the like had to be recovered. Even in very early times we see, from the exceedingly ancient story of Balaam, that he might at intervals be connected with important affairs; but it was not till the days of Samuel that his power began to be recognised as something great, over against that of those who conducted the primitive ritual by which Jahveh or other divinities were propitiated. Other divinities, I say, for it is clear, from the names of the family of Saul, that he was not quite sure whether Moloch or Baal had not a right to some share of his respect, or else he thought it indifferent by which of various names his tutelary God should be addressed. By this time writing had begun, though it must have been very sparingly used. Writing never becomes common till writing materials are cheap. "On ne bavarde pas sur la pierre!"

The familiar story of the life of Saul and of his relations with David is brightly recounted, and several points are brought out more clearly than is usual. The ascendency of Saul was purely that of a military leader. There was no considerable advance made, in his time, in the Constitution of the Civil Government or in religion; but he first created something like

a permanent military force in Israel. The accounts which have come down to us of the hostility between Samuel and him belong to a much later age, and are a reflection of the theocratic ideas which then prevailed. The same may be said of the horrible story of Agag.

There is no reason to imagine that either Saul or Samuel had the slightest objection to sacrificing on high places, or to almost any of the practices which were afterwards considered to be impious. Large figures of the size of a man were evidently used as symbols of the divinity or divinities by the daughter of Saul even after her marriage with David, who was unquestionably devoted to Jahveh and the favourite of the priestly party, which was slowly constituting itself. Witness the story of the massacre at Nob, near Jerusalem. Through a considerable part of his reign, if reign it can be called, for he was in no sense what we now understand by a king, Saul had good success against the western neighbours of Israel—the Philistines, the Carians, and Cretan immigrants who had settled on the seaboard; but, towards the end of it, these people felt themselves sufficiently strong to try to extend their incursions or their sovereignty over the Plain of

Esdraelon, easily accessible round the extremity of Carmel from the districts which they ruled, and it was in attempting to resist this invasion that Saul and Jonathan came by their deaths.

Renan brings out well the character of the short reign of Ishbosheth or Izbaal, showing that it was an effort on the part of the other portions of the Israelitish family to resist the growing ascendency of Judah, in which David's strength lay. That effort failed for the time, but was resumed in the days of David's grandson with complete success.

David's capital, at the commencement of his reign, was the important Judæan town of Hebron—a place which has had so strange a destiny, for to this day its common name is *El Khalil*, "the friend," from its legendary association with the life of Abraham, "the friend of God." Probably, however, because Hebron was too far from the warlike tribe of Benjamin and the still more northern parts of the country, David was anxious to obtain possession of the fortress of Jebus, which was close to Mizpeh and other commanding points in the territory of Benjamin. He succeeded in doing what Benjamin itself had failed to do, took Jebus and made it his capital. In doing so, he, of course without the remotest idea of what he was doing, took

one of the most momentous steps that was ever taken by man. That little hill of Sion became the magnetic pole of the love and religious poetry of the world. Situated in what in most countries would be called a howling wilderness, without trees and without water, far away from the great roads across the continents, its possession has again and again become the cause of gigantic wars, and it is, I fear, only too likely that it may be the cause of a good many more before "the play is played out." In conquering Jebus, David conquered not only for himself but for Jahveh. Jahveh was his God just as Chemosh the Moabite rival of Jahveh was the God of King Mesa. It must not be understood that David had any horror of other gods; one of his sons was called sometimes Eliada, sometimes Baaliada; but unconsciously he was working to make Jahveh something entirely different from a tribal or National God. He was working too not only for his own glory but for his own canonisation. Gradually the stripling hero of the Israelitish host, the outlaw of Adullam, was to become a Saint; he was to be thought of as the author of the Psalms, the type of the Saviour. Half the most admirable people in the world, delighting in the tender melancholy of the Songs of the Second

Temple, were to think of themselves as in communion with this robber-chief, and humanity was to believe in the final consummation and the "day of wrath" on the testimony of David, into whose thoughts it never entered, and of the Sibyl, who never existed at all. Well may Renan add: "Teste David cum Sibylla. O! Divine Comédie!"

The royalty of David, when it was once established at Jerusalem, was much more like what we understand by the term than was that of Saul. David ruled, in his fort on Sion, pretty much as one of the kinglets of Abyssinia now rules, or as Abd-el-Kader ruled at the height of his power. He adopted some of the state of Eastern royalty; he largely increased his harem, built considerably in the capital, and gathered round him a powerful body of mercenaries. In addition to heroes of his own race, he had in his service a number of Gibborim, or Braves as they were called, many of whom were not Israelites at all. Of some of them and their doings we have a brief but probably a contemporary and indeed official account in II. Samuel. The most reliable portion of the bodyguard consisted of Philistines who were known as Kréti-Pléti—Kréti being derived from the island of Crete, whence many of the Philistines had originally

come, and Pléti being a corruption of Plesti or Philistine. These performed in relation to David the same duties which the Swiss Guards performed in relation to the kings of France. Altogether the Philistines had a very remarkable influence upon Israel; they taught their predatory mountain neighbours the art of war, and what is more remarkable, they even left a good many words in the Hebrew language derived from their own, which was of Pelasgic origin, something between Greek and Latin. Most of these words are connected with military affairs, such as Mekéra, a sword, close to the Greek *μάχαιρα;* Mekona, an engine, close to Machina; and Pellex, a concubine, which is perfectly good Latin. In his wars with the Philistines David always treated them as his equals. In his wars with people of Semitic race he was to the last degree ferocious. Probably his ferocity was one of the elements of his success, and very successful he was, extending his power more or less over the whole of Palestine, at least as far north as Hasbeiya and even Damascus. Beyond the region inhabited by the Israelites, however, he had probably little power save for the exaction of tribute, and, even in Israel, his power, though great for certain purposes, was limited in all directions by the

rights of family and custom. Still he was so much greater than any Israelite before his days that his rule produced a very abiding impression, and after ages have thought of it as far more splendid than it really was. The glory of Judah rose with the glory of its indigenous king, and various poems which have come down to us celebrate it. Such is that recorded in Genesis xlix. 8-12.

David had next to nothing to do with the Psalms, but it is possible that he may have written the fragment repeated in Psalms lx. and cviii., together with portions of Psalm xviii.

His advent to supreme power raised the prestige of his tutelary God, and with the transfer of the Ark to Sion the worship of Jahveh entered on a new phase. The old shrines of Shiloh, Nob, and Bethel lost some of their importance, while David himself gained by being the friend and neighbour, the *Ger* or protégé of his special deity.

During his old age his power naturally declined, and polygamy produced its usual results in intrigues and a disputed succession. The rising of Absalom, of which we have an account, probably drawn up at the time, was very serious, and so was the attempt on the

part of some of the Northern tribes to break away under Sheba the son of Bikri.

David died about 1000 years B.C., a fact which should always be remembered in judging his complex character. The true religion was not yet born. His Jahveh was a very different ideal from that which was to dawn ere many generations upon Hosea and Amos.

His successor, brought up under the influence of his mother Bathsheba, who seems to have been a person of great ability, and probably, like most women of her time, by no means specially devoted to the worship of Jahveh, was a very different man, wider in his views, but born in the purple and with more of the character of the ordinary Oriental potentate. Wise he no doubt was, but his wisdom was of a kind different from what is usually supposed. The word used for it is *hokma*, which means the art of governing, statecraft according to the ideas then prevailing, which treated intrigue as essentially sagacious, and by no means drew the line at murder. It must be recollected, however, that the religion of Israel included no belief in a future state, but taught that all received their dues upon this earth. Solomon accordingly, when he put out of the way this or that inconvenient person, very

likely thought that he was acting as an agent of the Divinity. With his reign began a development of Israel which might have made it a great and prosperous nation of the ordinary kind; but, as Renan well remarks, although the happiness of a people is secured by its having no history, the glory of a people is often made by those who ruin it or by those whom it ruins. If ever that was true of a people, it was true of Israel.

Solomon, however, could not, as may be supposed, look a thousand years ahead. He did what any sensible man would have done in his circumstances, he made an alliance with Egypt; he was on the best of terms with Tyre, and although some of the country which his father for a moment subdued, revolted from him, he drove back the Arab robbers and reigned in peace over about a fourth part of Syria. He rebuilt many cities and built others, among them Tamar near Petra, which has been confused with Tadmor or Palmyra, with which Solomon had no connection whatever. He opened relations by the Red Sea with the West Coast of India, as well as with other distant countries, and he enrolled a body of cavalry. His luxury has probably been a good deal exaggerated; but there is no doubt that he must have greatly

overtaxed what was after all a very poor and tiny state, for we must not forget that the rich lowlands between the hills of Palestine and the sea belonged to the Philistines and not to him. It well may be that Louis XIV. did not more strain the comparatively gigantic resources of France than did the son of David those of Israel.

The outline of all that is known or can be plausibly guessed about the buildings of Solomon, and especially about the Temple, will be found in chapters xi. and xii. of the second volume of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël.* Renan conceives the Temple to have been a small building of the size of Notre Dame de Lorette in Paris, and not absolutely unlike that large chapel, in its exterior aspect. People are very apt, when they think of the Temple, to confuse the Herodian with the Solomonic edifice. The former was a vast establishment, a sort of combination of a great religious building and of public offices; the latter was more in the nature of a Sainte Chapelle attached to the palace. Small as it was, it was extremely unpopular, except in Jerusalem, and had no doubt a good deal to do with the revolt of the Northern tribes. What consecrates a church are its saints, but from the first the saints turned away from the

Temple. The prophets did not bless it, and very soon did much the reverse of blessing it. Like the St. Peter's of Julius II. it became the occasion of a schism.

Chapter xiii. is devoted to an account of what is known or guessed about the ritual of this period. All that we are told in such detail about the Temple ritual belongs to a far later age. Invented by the liturgists of the sixth century B.C., it was true, more or less, of the second Temple, but had absolutely no connection with the first. Towards the end of the reign of Solomon, the exactions, required by his expenditure, caused great discontent, many echoes of which have come down to us, one being the Song of Songs described on an earlier page, and which, although written after his time, reflects sufficiently well the dislike of his works and ways which was felt in Northern Palestine. Still he left, as did Louis XIV., a mighty name, for the author of Ecclesiastes writing, as we have seen, only about 125 B.C., thought that he was the richest and most powerful of men. In the Gospels his name is used as a synonym for splendour. In process of time Islam came and made him a personage more brilliant and magical still.

The foundation of all this edifice of glory is something like this:—

There reigned about 1000 years B.C., in a little acropolis of Syria, a little sovereign, intelligent, disengaged from national prejudices, with no idea whatever of the true vocation of his race, sage according to the then received opinions, without being much better or worse than the average Oriental prince of that epoch.

It is not unlikely that a portion of the Book of Proverbs, that which extends from the first verse of the tenth chapter to the sixteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter, may belong to his time, and it is even possible that he made the collection, but he most certainly did not deliberately sit down to compose Proverbs, though he may conceivably have written some infantine work on Natural History.

If Rehoboam had any merits they certainly did not lie in the direction of the statecraft which distinguished his father, and very early in his reign the composite kingdom, which had lasted for some seventy years, went to pieces. He was left with a territory so trifling, that it is doubtful whether the successor of Solomon was obeyed more than twenty miles from Jerusalem. Bethel, which became one of the two great sanctuaries of Israel, is close to that place—a station or two off, as we should say in a country where railways were in general use. Israel,

although possessing a territory much more extended than that which obeyed the descendant of David, was very loosely knit together, and although there was a king, things went very much as they had done in the days of the Judges. Soon foreign war came to add to existing causes of disorganisation, and Shishak, King of Egypt, marched, without encountering any serious resistance, first through Judah, then through Israel, right up to Megiddo.

In thinking of these states, we can hardly rate their material power or the numbers of their armed men too low. If they had been stronger, and able to enter into successful rivalry with the kingdoms of this world, they would never have become the sources of the religious life of humanity. From the earliest days of their separation, and even before it, the spirit of Judah and of Israel was very different. The life of the first was dominated by a city, small indeed but relatively important. The life of the second was the life of the country. Hence it retained much more of the freshness of the early world, and it is not surprising that the first beginnings of the Bible appeared there. They took the form of a collection of the traditional stories which had been for ages passing from mouth to mouth, first amongst the

Beni-Israel in their wanderings, and then amongst their descendants in Palestine. It was naturally only the outline of these narratives which was or could be committed to writing, for, in the first place, writing was in those days a very difficult matter, and, in the next, only the outlines of these stories were common to the countless narrators who whiled away the time by recounting battles, adventures, the appearances of angels or of divine persons, and what not, up and down the land.

The first collection of these traditions had not, when it was first composed, anything like the importance which it afterwards attained. No doubt the professional storytellers treated it with much contempt, as we may be sure the possessors of the traditions of the Apostles in Palestine treated the meagre Gospel of St. Mark when they first read it. Nevertheless the little manuscript was destined to rule the world. We can see that it was essentially an Israelitish work; Judah figures very little in it, and when it does, comes off badly. See the uncomfortable story of Tamar. On the other hand, Ephraim and Manasseh are brought prominently forward. Sichem is the centre of the family of Israel; Bethel is its sanctuary. The Trans-Jordanic country also interested the writer, as did the

desert beyond Judah, but not Judah itself. It is to the unknown author of this first sketch, of which so much was incorporated in Genesis, that we owe half of the early poetry of the world. Homer and the Bible have been its full-welling fountains. The little manuscript gave the tone to all the writings that followed it—a tone which is neither that of history, nor of romance, nor of myth, nor of anecdote, and for which we can find no analogy save in some of the pre-Islamite stories of Arabia. Its style resembles the panting improvisation of a child which wishes to bring out at once all that it has seen. The Gospels have something of the very same infantine charm.

Another very important element, in this embryonic state of the Bible, was found in the book or books, for it is really not clear whether they were one or two, known as the Book of Jashar and the Book of the Wars of Jahveh. Very probably the lament of David for Saul, Jonathan, and Abner may have formed the end of that cycle of poems, which went back to the days of the Desert and the first successes against the Amorites beyond Jordan.

The reign of Rehoboam and his son was a continuation, on a smaller scale, of the reign of Solomon, and the first king who gave things a

different direction at Jerusalem was Asa, who ascended the throne of David about 930 B.C. We know extremely little about his reign, which continued for forty-one years; but it is quite clear that he was much more devoted to Jahveh than his two predecessors, and that the religion of Jahveh became, from this time forward, more closely connected with the Temple at Jerusalem. He left his principles to his son Jehoshaphat, who carried them further, making war against other rites which contended for popular favour with those of Jahveh.

Meantime Israel was going through a period of anarchy and dynastic struggles which ended in the establishment on the throne, after all only for a brief period, of the family of Omri, a ruler who did for Israel a most necessary thing; he provided it with a capital—Samaria. His son was the famous Ahab, a sort of Northern Solomon, who was evidently a wise and tolerant ruler, trying to be on the best of terms with his neighbours, promoting commerce, and doing, in short, everything which would now be applauded. Even his bitterest enemies, from whom alone we have received his history, have really nothing definite to recount against him save the episode of Naboth, of which we have of course only heard one side. Ahab was in no way an apostate from

the worship of Jahveh; but like Gideon, like Saul and others, he probably used two different words for the Divinity he worshipped. Sometimes he paid honour to Jahveh and sometimes to Baal. He was in other words a great deal more eclectic than the extreme Jahvist party at all liked. That party too exceedingly disapproved his taste for a more brilliant form of life than was agreeable to the rural Israelite. Especially did its leaders detest Jezebel, a Phœnician princess whom Ahab had married, and who was to them the incarnation of all that they most abhorred as well in religion as in civil life, for her father seems to have been closely associated with the worship of Astarte. It cannot be proved, but at least it is highly probable, that the forty-fifth psalm, the beautiful *epithalamium* to which so prominent a position is given in our Christmas services, celebrates her nuptials with the King of Israel. Observe by the way that the name of Jahveh does not occur in it.

The secret of the future was not, however, with the tolerant and relatively civilised Ahab, but with the wild prophets who denounced him and his doings,—reactionaries who were always turning back to the nomad life and the far-off golden age of the Desert. Yet it was these people

who gradually transformed the capricious Jahveh, who protected his own people on one side of the Jordan, exactly as Chemosh protected his on the other, into the one God, the God of the Universe. That was a long process, but a very considerable step towards it was taken in the days of Ahab, and that step was connected with the deeds of Elijah and Elisha. The centre of the movement, which is incarnated for us in those very unhistoric names, was the higher part of Carmel and the portion of the Plain of Esdraelon on which it looks down. Its strength lay in the wandering bands known as the Schools of the Prophets, more or less analogous to the dervishes of Islam. The history of Elijah and Elisha, which we possess, was written ages after this time, and is legendary in the highest degree. Even the name of Elijah, which means "Jahveh is my God," thus representing exactly his supposed rôle in history, is probably a later invention, and his description as the Tishbite is the result of an error of a copyist. The nucleus, however, of the magnificent legend was probably a real person, perhaps the prophet who intervened in the affair of Naboth.

Jehoshaphat had the wisdom to live in strict amity with his northern neighbour, through all the days of Ahab, and long after the unfortunate

expedition in which the latter lost his life. In co-operation with Ahab's second son Joram, Jehoshaphat made a great campaign against Mesa of Moab, the Mesa of the Moabite Stone, one of the most interesting documents in human history. It was not till after the death of Jehoshaphat that the revolution took place which destroyed the House of Omri, and which is so picturesquely recounted in the Book of Kings. Another revolution which took place at Jerusalem overthrew the power of the widowed Queen Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. We know very little about this last event, but, like the former, it was undoubtedly a victory for the extreme prophetic or Jahvist party. That party however, although its proceedings could not be justified by any law human or divine, nevertheless had in it a nucleus of good which, before very long, was to come to the surface and govern the future.

The fact that all that we know about Jehu is that he was an Oriental usurper, of the familiar murderous type, should not prevent our seeing that the party which was behind him was far superior to its adversaries. Fanatical it was, furiously fanatical; but its fanaticism, unlike that of Islam and like that of the Protestant Reformation, contained a germ which was to produce great and beautiful things. The savage

seers of Israel were emancipators without desiring so to be, for they combated the worst of tyrannies, the connivance of ignorant masses with an abased priesthood. We have seen that Israel already possessed a sort of embryo of the Bible in a little collection of legends, and in the Book or Books of Jashar and the Wars of Jahveh. Of these embryonic manuscripts there were probably very few copies, though the legends and songs contained in them were in one shape or another widely known. Somewhere about the days of Jehu a further step was taken ; the idea of something like a history from the Jahvist point of view grew up in the mind of an unknown genius of the Northern Kingdom. Taking as a basis the works just mentioned, adding other materials and much of his own, this writer, who seems to have been at once austere and tender, a pessimist of the pessimists and an idyllic poet, developed the narrative which all scholars have long consented to describe as the work of the "Jehovist," from the fact that the name of Jahveh is used throughout it.

The writer was in strong contrast with his predecessor, who merely collected legends. He was a philosopher writing to explain God and the Universe with their relations to each other, according to his ideas. We only possess large

fragments, not the whole of what he wrote, because somewhat later, in the days of Hezekiah, his work was completely revised and fused with another work belonging to the Southern Kingdom of which we shall have to speak presently, the work of the writer known as the Elohist.

Enough remains, however, to have affected the period of nearly three thousand years, which has elapsed since his day, in a most powerful manner. He was a gloomy thinker; Renan compares him to the German Hartmann. His ideas of the corruption of all nature remained on among the Jewish writings without much affecting Jewish thought till the days of St. Paul, who developed it into his form of Christianity. Renan thinks that the Jehovist belonged to the school known as that of Elijah, that he lived about 850 B.C., that he was, so to speak, the philosopher of the prophets and a man of quite extraordinary power, of powers so great that Michael Angelo alone was fit to interpret him. To him we owe the form in which the Babylonian myth of Paradise has come down to us—the creation of woman, the story of the serpent, the expulsion from Eden, Cain and Abel, the peopling of the world by the descendants of Cain, the legends of Isaac, Rebecca, Rachel, and much that has become almost a portion of our minds. He

too it was who first introduced into our sacred books a code of laws, that known as the Book of the Alliance or Covenant, printed in our Bibles in Exodus, from chap. xxi. 1 to xxiii. 19. This must not be considered as in any way representing a system of laws which were in vigour at the time. It is the writer's view of what ought to be law. It is to be compared with the code of Menu, not with any statute that was ever ordained in any country by king or parliament.

The Jahvist movement in Jerusalem was calmer than in the Northern Kingdom, for in Jerusalem it was directed by priests—by, so to speak, an Established Church. In Israel it was directed by prophets, outside declaimers against all establishments and authority. Thanks too, as we have seen, to the more poetical life of the North, the little collection of legends, the Book or Books of Jashar, and the Wars of Jahveh had grown up there. It is quite possible that no copy of these works had reached Jerusalem. There too, however, as writing became more general, the idea of drawing up something like a history dawned upon the mind of some priest, known to Biblical scholars as the Elohist, from the fact that he does not use the word Jahveh until after that name is supposed to have been announced

and explained to Moses. To him too the world owes much, for he wrote the sublime commencement of Genesis; but just as the Jehovist did infinite mischief by affording a basis for the theology of St. Paul, so the Elohist did infinite mischief by his magnificent account of the Creation. As compared with the ordinary cosmogonies it was sanity itself; but in the hands of the bigots who gave law to the Christian Church from the thirteenth century almost to our own day, it kept back science for more than five hundred years.

The ideas of the Elohist were very different, in many ways, from those of the Jehovist. He had never heard of any son of Adam save Seth. It is highly probable that his ten generations of patriarchs, Methuselah and the rest, were the equivalent of the ten mythical kings who, in the Chaldæan system of chronology, filled up the interval between the Creation and the Deluge.

The information which was to be obtained at Jerusalem, and not in the North, enabled him to insert in his narrative the exceedingly valuable glimpse into the earliest antiquity contained in Genesis x., and to him too we owe the Decalogue. The Book of the Covenant or Alliance was the germ of what was to be eventually the

Jewish law; the Decalogue was the germ of the moral law of the world. It was probably written in one of the little chambers of the Temple—another association for that historic spot. Different in innumerable respects, the Jehovist and the Elohist have a good deal in common, not in their philosophy or history, but in their morality and poetry. We have all read Genesis xxiii. and xxiv. in English, very often, without suspecting that the first was by the Elohist, the other by the Jehovist, written accordingly in different countries under different circumstances by different people.[1]

Meantime, while all this religious and literary progress was going on, Israel was making little absolute and no relative progress as one of the powers of the world, and the same may be said of Judah. The attempt of Solomon to give his kingdom alliances and a political *status* had failed. The attempt of Ahab to do the same for his had equally failed. In the days of Amaziah of Judah and Joash of Israel, about 825 B.C., the two kingdoms went to war. Israel defeated Judah and took Jerusalem; but on

[1] Professor Kautzsch in his great translation assigns xxiv. to the Jehovist; but does not assign xxiii. to the Elohist. He assigns it to the Authors of what he calls the Priesterschrift. In all these disputed matters I merely set forth Renan's view—my object being throughout to show what *he* thought.

both sides great moderation was shown. Such dissensions, however, in the case of two small peoples were all to the profit of their powerful neighbours, of which Damascus had been long formidable, and Nineveh was now about to become overwhelming.

Joash of Israel was succeeded by an able ruler, Jeroboam II., who even conquered Moab. To his reign belongs the furious attack against that country to be found in Isaiah xv. and xvi., but which was really written and doubtless declaimed by Jonah, the son of Amittaï, the same person with whose name was connected, ages later, the strange composition known as the Book of Jonah, of which I shall speak farther on. The material prosperity which Israel enjoyed under Jeroboam II. made many people rich. In those ancient times, thousands of persons relatively intelligent believed what thousands of fools do now, that the rich were always becoming richer and the poor poorer, that wealth was in fact the cause of poverty. These bad economists found a voice about 800 years B.C. in Amos of Tekoa, the first socialist; and all the more furious a socialist in that he had no belief in a future state. Chapter xvii. of the fourth book of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* contains a most interesting study of this work and that of Joel, which was,

quite possibly, only a continuation of Amos and not the work of a separate writer. I will not attempt to analyse this, but will only call attention to the very advanced theology contained in chapter iv. 4 and in chapter v. 21 of Amos. The idea of a spiritual as against that of a mere ceremonial religion is there affirmed as strongly as possible.

From this time onward, for a good many years, the dominant fact in Palestine was the growth of the Assyrian power. Between it and Egypt both the Palestinian kingdoms formed a sort of "buffer state." Their kings were much in the position of that little-to-be-envied potentate, the Ameer of Afghanistan, whose well-imagined reflections have been put into so admirable a form by one of the best of our poets, who is also one of the wisest of our Asiatic statesmen.

Parties were formed alike in Judah and in Israel, not wholly dissimilar to the Guelphs and Ghibellines of the Italian Middle Ages. Israel may be taken to represent the Guelph party, the enemies of the great Assyrian Emperor; Judah, at least at first, ranked itself among his friends, chiefly because its inhabitants hated their nearer neighbours at Samaria and Damascus more heartily than they did the more distant power.

The most remarkable product of this time

are the prophecies of Hosea, a follower of Amos, of Ephraimite origin. We have not in him the grand style which is found in Isaiah, but all the ideas peculiar to the prophets in their highest state of development are already to be found in his writings. Living about the year 750 B.C., he is altogether a pupil of the Jehovist of the century before.

After the days of Jeroboam II. the kingdom of Israel sank more and more into anarchy, and the superiority in religion, as well as in everything else, gradually passed to Judah. The first Isaiah, far the greatest man whom the School of the Prophets had hitherto produced, belonged to the Southern Kingdom. He was to Amos and Hosea what Virgil was to Ennius. Contemporaneous with him was Micah, also a very remarkable writer.

Isaiah, although he had no public function and no official title, was for fifty years the conscience of Judah in action, a very notable politician, publicist, and journalist, as we should say, in addition to being a man of great spiritual insight—all this engrafted upon something of the old Nabi. One does not, however, see a trace in him of the antique form of divination, no recourse to the Urim and Thummim for example. The inspiration of Jahveh replaces all

that. Whatever else he was, he did more to spread a lofty kind of religion than any one who had lived up to his time.

The reign of Ahaz and his relations with Isaiah, the fall of Damascus, the death agonies of Israel, are rapidly narrated. Samaria fell before the arms of Sargon in the year 721 B.C., and Assyrian governors were established throughout the Northern Kingdom. Tyre, on the other hand, held out in spite of the predictions of Isaiah. Judah had abandoned Israel, and was rewarded for its prudent, if not very fraternal, conduct, by living on for about 150 years as a vassal of Assyria.

Israel was in many ways superior to Judah; but it wanted the strong organisation given to its neighbour by the work of David, and above all by his selection of a capital. The disappearance of Samaria helped the work for which both Israel and Judah unconsciously laboured, the creation of religion.

David, the hero of Judah, became idealised more and more, till he was eventually thought of as "the man after God's own heart," and that even when Jahveh had developed into the true God, the just God, the God of the Universe!

The reproaches levelled in later ages against the religion of the Northern tribes were absurd

anachronisms. It was little more than a generation or so before the fall of Samaria that the Jahvist movement at Jerusalem overtook and passed that of Israel. Most of the practices, which were later declaimed against by the religious teachers, were common to both kingdoms. One of the worst—human sacrifice—was more Judæan than Israelite.

The long reign of Hezekiah was important in a great variety of ways. Public works of relative importance, reasonably conceived, were set on foot and executed; Hebrew art, such as it was, arrived at its highest development under the influence of the Assyrian style which began now to influence Jerusalem more than that of Egypt. As the territory ruled by the king became smaller, centralisation and his personal power increased together. The religion of Jahveh became more and more consolidated. From this time forward, the tutelary God of the nation was a synonym for Elohim, and was thought of as the God of the Universe.

A party which we may call that of the Puritans had much influence at court, and had its own nominees appointed to high places. The Temple grew in importance, the brazen Serpent, an early idol of Jahveh, was destroyed, as were many of the sacred stones and the

Aseroth, emblems of Phallic worship, bearing the sign of Astarte. It is probable that the extremists tried to get Hezekiah to insist upon Jahveh being adored only at Jerusalem, but that they were not yet strong enough to manage this. The festivals increased in importance, and the trifling size of the country made resort to Jerusalem, in connection with them, natural and easy. The Puritans separated themselves more and more from the mass of the people, and were known as Anavim, *the pious*, and Ebionim, *the poor.*

There was also a great literary activity. The northern and southern sketches of the earliest sacred history were, as we have seen, probably worked together at this time, on the principle usual with Oriental compilers, who create something not unlike the walls which we see in Greece or Italy, built up from fragments of ancient monuments. The Greeks had genius even in their compilations. Most fortunately the Hebrews had not, and thus a great many pieces of inestimable ancient writings are preserved to us.

The sacred history compiled at the time of Hezekiah resulted in the production of about half of our present Hexateuch. Deuteronomy was not in it, nor the Levitical laws, and many other things.

"The men of Hezekiah," as they were

called, did much for us in many directions. Most of the Book of Judges was probably thrown into its present form in those days—say about 710 B.C.—and we must be grateful to its author for not tampering very much with the ancient text. While he preserved it, he added no doubt reflections of his own; yet a great deal of what he has given us belongs to the ninth or tenth century B.C. A large part of the Book of Kings may have been originally compiled under Hezekiah, but much of what we read under that name is a poor summary of a fuller work drawn up after the Captivity. The men of Hezekiah began the collection of Proverbs which we now possess; but a more spontaneous literary movement, not specially connected with them, gave us the first Psalms, perhaps the most beautiful, certainly the most fruitful of all the creations of Israelitish genius. The old form of prayer, accompanied by dances and cries to attract the attention of the God, was rejected with the follies of a coarser age. The prayer of the heart was born.

To this epoch, too, must probably be assigned the Book of Job, the Hebrew book *par excellence*, and also the Song of Songs. Neither of these, as we have already seen, had their birthplace in Jerusalem; but the literary

movement of the days of Hezekiah may have preserved them for us with other works belonging to the northern or eastern portion of Palestine, just as Rome and Florence preserved and were stimulated by the works which came thither after the fall of Constantinople.

The invasion of Sennacherib and the discomfiture of his army naturally led to a great increase in the prestige of Isaiah, who had throughout urged the king to trust in the aid of Jahveh and to neglect all the ordinary counsels of prudence. His following maintained its ascendency till the death of Hezekiah; but Manasseh was a prince of different views, and with his reign began a strong reaction against the Puritans who had, doubtless, as is the custom of their kind, pushed their triumph too far.

We know extremely little about the reign of Manasseh; but we do know that it lasted for fifty-five years, and that his policy was in the highest degree disagreeable to the extreme party. He seems to have been more or less eclectic in religion, after the fashion of Solomon, and it is more than probable that the horrible custom of human sacrifice, to which many of the nearest relatives of the Israelites were so inclined, may have reappeared at Jerusalem in his reign. What is quite certain is that the great length

and comparative prosperity of his rule must have been very galling and very unintelligible to a party which thought that Jahveh stood by his worshippers in this world, and which never dreamt of having a future life to fall back upon. The policy of Manasseh was also that of Amon, and was continued during the adolescence of Josiah, when a Regency governed. During all this period there was a sort of lull in prophecy, and Nahum, the only prophet of those years whose writings have come down to us, appears to have been much more of a publicist, thinking of the foreign relations of Judah, than of a religious teacher. With Zephaniah the tone of Amos reappears, and ere long, but not till an interval of seventy years had gone by from the days of Isaiah, an even more remarkable representative of the ultra-religious party came to the front in the person of Jeremiah.

Renan's picture of this great religious genius, the first type of the fierce Saints of the Christian Middle Age, is particularly well worth studying, and contains a good deal that will be new to readers who have not occupied themselves specially with the Old Testament. He thinks that Jeremiah exercised a decisive influence on all the future history of Jerusalem—on the stand made by the Maccabees, on the first appearance

of Christianity, and on the religious exaltation which threw Palestine into its hopeless struggle against Rome.

Under some circumstances, which we do not know, Josiah must have become converted to the views of the extreme party. It would seem to have been merely a personal change of opinion on his part, for his sons certainly did not share it, nor did the ladies of the palace. He proceeded, however, to carry into effect his own religious ideas with the usual determination of an Eastern ruler or of any of the German princes, Catholic or Protestant, who took an active part in the religious troubles of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. Had Jeremiah a powerful influence in bringing about this change? That is a question which cannot be answered, from any historical data we possess; but it is at least extremely probable. Anyhow, it was his religious policy which triumphed along the whole line, and a reaction set in against the reaction inaugurated by Manasseh, which brought to the extreme party very much greater successes than they had ever had in the days of Hezekiah. The local shrines all over Judah were suppressed, and the foreign deities were disowned; the Temple was purified and rose immensely in importance, becoming as completely the centre

of the religious life of the nation as the Temple of Melkarth was at Tyre. Judaism, as we are accustomed to think of it, was fairly founded, and the influence of Josiah extended over most of the territory which had belonged to Israel. In that territory the great majority of the inhabitants were the descendants of those who lived there at the fall of Samaria. The transplantation of the ten tribes, with all the fancies that have been founded on it, is a mere dream. Only the upper class was carried off, and the colonists brought into the country were gradually merged to a great extent in the old Israelitish population. The religious ideas which had thus triumphed were crystallised in the Book of the Law supposed to have been found in the Temple and attributed to Moses. We do not know who actually held the pen ; but if it was not Jeremiah himself, it was some one acting in the closest concert with him. The book consisted of the portion of Deuteronomy extending from the fifth verse of the fourth chapter to the end of chapter xxviii. Judged by its time, the time usually connected with the mythical Draco in Greece, say 622 B.C., it was a very remarkable and advanced production, the programme of a sort of theocratic socialism and containing a great deal that was good.

It was not the only literary work of this period. Much seems to have been done in adding to the Hexateuch, although very large and important parts of it belong to the period after the Captivity, including amongst many other things the imaginary institution of Levitical cities by Joshua and everything that relates to what we call the Tabernacle, which never existed *in rerum naturâ*, but was imagined to have been a sort of prefigurement of the Temple. Several beautiful Psalms probably belong to the same period, such as the first and the twenty-third, but style had declined. The Hebrew of Deuteronomy is very inferior to that written in the reign of Hezekiah.

Page 253, on the immense benefits conferred upon us by the movement which produced the Psalms, is well worth turning to. Its central thought is "*Une chose capitale naissait, la piété, la piété indépendante de tout dogme, consolation et force de la vie.*"

The ideal of the prophets was a peace which should reign everywhere—a state of things in which, all traces of a military aristocracy having disappeared, nations would think of nothing but social reforms. That was not a possible policy for any nation in those days any more than it would be in our own. It would be well if some

of our contemporaries took to heart a saying of Renan's, "The nations that give themselves up to social questions will perish." That is what the prophets insisted that Judah should do. Judah did so, and in a generation after the reforms of Josiah, Judah had ceased to exist as a kingdom. True, it had founded the religion of the world, and so was well recompensed, but that is one of those things which is not done twice in history.

Meantime, all round Judah great changes were taking place. The fall of the Assyrian Empire about 625 B.C. showed that Nahum had looked forward very intelligently over a quarter of a century; but Babylon resumed the position which Nineveh had taken from it for about 150 years, and Judah accepted under the conqueror the position which it had held under the conquered.

The Scythians seem to have invaded Northern Palestine, and to have reached the Plain of Esdraelon about this time; but we know nothing save the bare fact that they did so. We know, indeed, very little about the greater events of this period, even about the death of Josiah, who was killed at the age of thirty-eight, fighting on the side of his liege-lord of Babylon against Necho II. of Egypt.

It is possible even that Jerusalem was actually

taken by the Egyptians under Necho, for it is difficult to think what other city than Jerusalem can be meant by Cadytis, the fall of which is mentioned in the second book of Herodotus. However this may be, Necho was for three years the Lord of Syria. Jehoahaz, a younger son of Josiah, who had been placed upon the throne, went to do him homage, but was repulsed, much to the satisfaction of Jeremiah and his friends. Jehoiakim, the eldest son, was made king in his stead, but was soon attacked with the utmost fury by the same party. There is every reason to suppose that he was a moderate and reasonable ruler, doing his best under desperate circumstances. He must certainly have been a patient one, for he did not put Jeremiah to death, though he did execute a certain Uriah who seems to have fairly exhausted even his long-suffering. It was in the fourth year of his reign that another great revolution occurred in the appearance of Nebuchadnezzar, who, 606 B.C., gave the Egyptians a crushing defeat at Carchemish. Immediately the Babylonian monarch became the hero of Jeremiah, and he poured forth denunciations of lamentation, mourning, and woe to all people. An exterminating Jahveh, a sort of Attila, was his ideal. From that time to this, there have always

been found any number of preachers in all lands who have been inspired by his fury, by his *Onera*, or Burdens, as the Middle Age called them, a very geography of massacre and hatred. Of course, he was about as popular with the patriotic party in Jerusalem as would have been an orator at Notre Dame, who, in August 1870, had applauded the proceedings of the Germans and wished them success. Side by side with Jeremiah, Habakkuk, with more literary talent, poured forth his declamations. He was, however, chiefly a publicist and a patriot, while his more famous contemporary was more occupied with religion than even with politics.

For the moment, the horrible anticipations of Jeremiah were not fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem, but was satisfied with receiving the submission of Jehoiakim, and three or four years passed in peace. Then, under circumstances about which we know nothing, Jehoiakim revolted against Nebuchadnezzar, and came by his death we do not know exactly how. His son Jeconiah succeeded, and was not less savagely attacked by Jeremiah. Jerusalem was soon besieged. Habakkuk did his best to animate the defence, but it was all in vain, and when Nebuchadnezzar arrived in person, the young king surrendered. The same system of trans-

portation as had been applied to Samaria was applied to Jerusalem, but on an even smaller scale. Nebuchadnezzar does not seem to have been well advised in what he did, for he transported first the most reasonable and moderate portion of the population, leaving the lower classes with all their delusions and without any guidance, to break out again on the first opportunity.

Zedekiah, the uncle of the late king, was placed on the throne. He was not less obnoxious to Jeremiah than his predecessors, and now the course taken by that powerful personage seems to have been more in accordance with political sagacity. The exiles, with the usual hopes of exiles, stimulated the desire to throw off the Babylonian yoke, and there were prophets or publicists who took exactly the opposite view of what was wise from that which was taken by Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar had unwittingly carried with him a young prophet not less dangerous than Jeremiah: this was Ezekiel, who, five years after his deportation, began to prophesy, and commenced the long series of Apocalypses. He kept sending to Jerusalem his visions—some of which were very wild; some, on the contrary, of a high order of religious thought—up to the time of the final investment of the city.

The same religious movement, which gave rise to the rage of Jeremiah, produced at the same time not only, as we have seen, some beautiful Psalms, but also some pages incorporated in the Book of Zechariah, though by an unknown hand—the hand of a writer whom Renan calls the Great Idealist of Israel, an enemy of the abuses of prophecy, and a precursor of the writer whom we know as the second Isaiah. Meantime events took their course. The unhappy Zedekiah, dragged in one direction by the foolish patriots, in another by Jeremiah and his friends, at length revolted. The vessel of clay dashed itself against the vessel of iron, and the natural result followed. All the time Ezekiel kept pouring out prophecies against Egypt and against Tyre, very striking, but which would impress us more if they had not been entirely falsified by events. At last the troops in Jerusalem, taking the king with them, made a sortie, which was at first successful. They were pursued, however, and overtaken in the Plain of Jericho. All the horrors perpetrated by Eastern conquerors took place, and another deportation, much larger than the former one, combined with the destruction of the city, seemed to have made an end of the importance of Jerusalem for all

time. The whole country fell into confusion. Jeremiah, contrary to his wishes, was carried to Egypt, where he occupied himself in denouncing the country in which he found an asylum against his will.

By the second deportation religion seems to have lost all its principal representatives in Palestine. The capital was a ruinous heap. The reforms of Josiah, concentrating the worship of Jahveh there, had completely disorganised his worship throughout the country districts. In fact, the religion of Jahveh had practically ceased to exist in Judæa; it had been transplanted to Babylon, but there it flourished with renewed vigour. The actual deportation of the captives must have led to much terrible suffering; but when they were once arrived in Babylonia, their position was very far indeed from being that of slaves. They were interned among the towns and villages of Lower Chaldæa, but were free to pursue their own occupations. Not a few threw themselves into the life of the country of their exile, which was having a new burst of splendour and prosperity; but the extreme religious party, with whom lay the future, felt nothing but horror for the people amongst whom they found themselves. The Levites (that is to say the persons who had con-

ducted the local worship through Judah, before the reforms of Josiah brought them to Jerusalem), the priests, and all the special followers of the prophets lived apart. We have an echo of their feelings in the Psalm, "By the Waters of Babylon."

The persons who were deported from Israel 133 years before, at the time of the fall of Samaria, vanished away. They were absorbed by the nations amongst whom they lived, but the religious progress in the interval had been tremendous, and the religion of Judah was now a bar of iron. Nebuchadnezzar, without knowing it, had worked for Jeremiah, just as Titus, quite as unconsciously, worked for the Christians. The great consoler of the exiles, the great inspirer of hope, was Ezekiel. His leading idea was that Jahveh was bound by his word to restore his people. Nothing can be more curious than the way in which his passionate confidence translated itself into dreams of a most elaborate character, dreams full of details of priestly organisation and ritual, of a river which was to flow forth from the Temple, pass down the burning valleys that lie between it and the Dead Sea, making them fertile, and turning the Asphaltic Pool itself into fresh water. It was from his Jerusalem that the author of the Apo-

calypse was fated to take his description of the celestial city.

He had, too, a great deal of influence on the Hexateuch, as now known to us. More especially is the Book of Leviticus largely due to him. Dreams about the Tabernacle, dreams about the Levites, dreams about the Aaronic priesthood, stiffened, in his hands, into a code, one of those codes which it is easy to make on paper, and which work quite satisfactorily as long as they are never put in practice. Of all his Utopias the wildest was that of the year of Jubilee, which no one ever tried to make a reality. The Sabbatical year, a much older fancy among the Israelitish dreamers of codes, was actually carried into effect, no doubt with immense modifications, after the return from captivity. Carried completely into effect it would have resulted in a constantly recurring famine. Probably Ezekiel was only one of a large group which occupied its time with this strange kind of literature. Happily there was a better kind of literature being produced at the same period, as for example many prophecies attributed to, or rather put under the protection of the name of, Jeremiah, the wonderful Psalm "By the Waters of Babylon," already mentioned, and a whole series of utterances, now to be

found dotted about amongst those of the real Isaiah.

In the year 536 B.C. came the taking of Babylon, and the advent of Cyrus the Persian, the Charlemagne of that early world. He inaugurated the system of government which seems best to have suited the Jewish race. Placed under the shadow of a mighty power the Jews were able to give themselves up to their religious visions. Without its external support they would have been destroyed by other races more fitted for the rough work of the world. Under the Achæmenid protection Israel created nothing, for the capacity of its creative genius was exhausted, but it developed what it had created, with perfect liberty. Ezra and Nehemiah would have been impossible side by side with a king of Jerusalem.

Renan places the anonymous poet whom we usually speak of as the second Isaiah about the year 536 B.C. The real Isaiah, himself a great though a far inferior genius, has obtained the title of the first Hebrew writer and the Eagle of the Prophets, because compositions have been attributed to him of which he never wrote a line. In them begins to appear the phrase, the "Servant of the Lord," the "Servant of Jahveh," taken as the synonym of the devout

portion of Israel, of the Ebionim, and the Anavim. The wonderful fifty-third chapter, which has been so often supposed to refer to Christ, really refers to the idealised figure of devout Israel. Some phrases in it may be connected with the story of the sufferings of Jeremiah.

The great anonymous poet cared very little, it would seem, for the law, and not much for circumcision or for fasting. The magnificent sixtieth chapter, taken up by the Seer of the Apocalypse and idealised by Christianity, is still a reflection of the golden dream of the best portion of the world.

The two Isaiahs so closely linked together by their genius and their hopes, so widely severed in time, were the intellectual forerunners of Jesus, of the Evangelists, of the author of the Apocalypse, of the Alexandrian Sibyllists, of the Abbot Joachim, and of the followers of the Eternal Gospel. From the summit of the mountain on which stands the second Isaiah, we look across over a deep depression to another mountain on which stands Jesus. Of all the books of the Bible, the second Isaiah has furnished the greatest amount of material which has been worked up by Christianity. It has passed almost bodily into the oratory of the

pulpit and the liturgy of the Church. The one thing which can at all offend the reader in his writings is the name Jahveh. A god who has got a proper name is a false god. By this time, however, Jahveh had become identified with the God of the Universe. In a certain sense he conquered the world, but in doing so he disappeared. It came to be thought impious to pronounce his name, and now no human being knows quite certainly how it was pronounced. The finite became absorbed in the infinite, and the name of Jahveh was replaced by the vague word Adonaï, the Lord. To this period also belongs the Book of Jonah, written in a very tolerant spirit, and dictated probably by a strong feeling of dislike to the prophets of the raging school which was always announcing calamity and vengeance. It is an unique book in the Bible, and it is more than probable that parts of it were written with a view to turn some of these persons into ridicule.

We know little of the circumstances of the return from Babylon. At a later period of their history the Jews imagined that Cyrus had restored them by special decree. It is as likely as not that he never heard of them. He had, however, no interest in keeping up arrangements which had been made by the power he

had overthrown, and there is no reason why he should have objected to an emigration of Jews from Babylonia.

Great numbers stayed in that country, but those who returned, apparently in two expeditions, one under Sheshbazar the son, the other under Zorobabel, the grandson of Jehoiakim, belonged to the devout section, animated by the hopes of a whole succession of prophets. If the return from captivity had not taken place, Judah would have had the fate of the Israelites who were carried off when Samaria fell. It would have melted away in the East, Christianity would not have existed, the Hebrew writings would have been lost; we should not have known anything of those strange histories which are our charm and consolation. The little group which traversed the desert carried with it the future. It founded definitively the religion of humanity!

With that sentence closes the last volume of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* which appeared during the life of its illustrious author. Two more volumes, as we shall see later, are still to come of the book I have been trying to analyse.

CHAPTER IX

I HAVE mentioned that the opening volume of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* was contained in one of the first parcels which I opened on arriving at Haïfa, and I need not say that our residence in Palestine was a subject of frequent communications with the Renan household, before, during, and after it.

To a letter from Madame Renan, dated in January 1888, I owe the great pleasure, which I certainly should not otherwise have enjoyed, of seeing the Castle of the Teutonic Knights in Galilee, the Montfort of the French, the Starkenberg of the Germans. It was there that the Chapter of the Order is said to have been held, which came to the conclusion that it was not strong enough to do anything more against the Saracens, and that the wise course would be to transfer its activity to Europe and convert the pagan Prussians!

The occasion of this letter was an account I had sent of a visit to Athlît, which is within a ride of Haïfa, and is curiously little known considering the tragic interest of its history, for under the name of *Castellum Peregrinorum* it was long the gateway of Palestine, and it saw the very end of all the strange eventful history of the Crusades. It was to the Christians precisely what "the last sigh of the Moor" was to Islam.

The next letter I received was about Damascus, and echoed my own impressions of that much over-rated spot, which one ought certainly to see before one has become familiar with Asiatic cities. Its reputation was made by those who approached it from the East, that is from the desert. Kinglake was there at the one divine moment of its year, when the roses are in perfection; but when the traveller looks from the minaret of the great Mosque and sees the "street called Straight" roofed in with corrugated iron, as is now the case, it would take a good many roses to restore his equanimity.

The same letter told of a project to which Renan often recurred, but which, alas! was never fulfilled, of a second visit to Scotland. Another, a little later, was full of the sad event which had robbed the Continent of Europe

of the best and wisest of its sovereigns. It came from the midst of the Breton villeggiatura where M. and Madame Renan were surrounded by a happy home circle of children and grand-children in a region "frais et doux avec des bois et des prés verts, des landes couvertes d'ajoncs, un ciel gris, des rochers et une mer splendide ou sombre."

Nothing in fact was wanting but "Tristram's aged hound" to reproduce the picture which Matthew Arnold, for whom the Renans had the greatest regard and whom we had then recently lost, gives of the life of the second Iseult—Iseult of Brittany.

I find another letter early in 1889, partly about the very remarkable address on the Revolution and its personages which Renan had delivered at the time of the reception of M. J. Claretie at the Académie, partly about a paper he had been writing on the history of the *Journal des Débats* under the Second Empire, and partly about the ever-interesting subject of Palestine.

A later letter in the same year brought the news that the third volume of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* was in type, and that its proofs were being corrected, and announces the speedy publication of the early work

L'Avenir de la Science, already mentioned, which made its appearance in the spring of the next year.

Renan had expected that the revision of this book would take very little time, for he had determined to change nothing, only to correct the proofs, amend inadvertencies, and here and there improve the style. He had reckoned, however, without his host, and most of his leisure during the winter of 1889-90 was given to it. The Preface, which of course alone belongs to the period of his life at which we have now arrived, is written in that rather discouraged tone which I have noticed in speaking of his translation of Ecclesiastes, but is curious and interesting, though not one of his more valuable essays.

When the *Avenir de la Science* had appeared, it was the third volume of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël* which took its place on his library table. Volume II. had been published in 1889.

The third volume was published before the end of 1890, and a letter early in January of 1891 spoke of the slow advance of the fourth volume, and of a work on the French Rabbis of the fourth century, intended to form part of the Literary History of France which had

been begun by the Benedictines, and was being continued under the auspices of the Académie des Inscriptions.

In July I had excellent news of Renan's health, of the rapid advancement of the fourth volume of the *Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*, and of the intended publication at the commencement of 1892 of a sort of continuation of his *Souvenirs*, the same book which appeared eventually under the title of *Feuilles Détachées*. A little later I heard that the manuscript of the fourth volume of the *Histoire* was nearly finished, but that it was to extend only to Judas Maccabeus,[1] and that a fifth volume would be necessary for treating the Asmonean dynasty, and forming a connection with the *Vie de Jésus*.

Still later came a letter from Cap Martin, near Mentone, whither he had gone for a little sun before he returned to Paris to recommence his Hebrew lectures at the Collège de France.

This journey seemed at first to have been a great success, but on his return to the north all his old troubles came back upon him with renewed force, and he was for some time

[1] An interesting fragment appears in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for 15th March 1893.

most seriously ill. When he was somewhat recovered he sent me, through Madame Renan, very affectionate messages about the death of Lord Arthur Russell, for whom both he and she had that deep esteem, which was so generally felt by all who came into close relations with that wise and pure and lofty spirit.

Not long afterwards *Feuilles Détachées* arrived, and I read it from cover to cover with great interest. At the same time, I should not be inclined to put it quite on a level with any of his other books consisting of collected pieces, for the very simple reason that he had already collected, or allowed to be collected, nearly all his best things. Among the most interesting in the volume is the Answer to the *Discours de réception* of M. J. Claretie at the French Academy, already mentioned, full of most remarkable judgments on the Revolution. See at page 241 an admirable passage on the fate of Camille Desmoulins and his friends.

Excellent, too, is the speech at the Dîner Celtique which contains the lovely story of the girl who called at the Collège de France and presented its Administrateur with a medal—without a word of controversy. "Oh! profonde habileté de la colombe!"

A speech about Brizeux the Breton poet, the little idyll of Emma Kosilis, and a variety of other papers, are all excellent, and the last paragraph of the Preface, beginning "Père celeste," may be taken as its author's final confession. Fortunate, indeed, are those who have so little with which to reproach themselves!

A little later in the year a change to Fontainebleau somewhat improved Renan's condition, and he was able to go at midsummer to Brittany. At first the accounts I received from Rosmapamon were good, but soon things again took a bad turn; he was brought back to the Collège he loved so well, and on the 1st October all the world learned that the greatest genius in France and the greatest prose writer in the world had passed away.

He died perfectly happy; his lofty intelligence kept its clearness and his heart its gentleness. He said to his devoted wife, admirably described by him in his dedication to her of his *St. Paul*, that his life had been happy and that his work was done.

How all the journals of the world rang with his fame, and how he was buried with all the honours which a nation passionately devoted to military display could bestow—many eminent persons bearing testimony to his merits from

many various points of view—is fresh in the memory of all. My own thoughts went back to his own noble words at Tréguier—his best epitaph :—

"Ce que j'ai toujours eu, c'est l'amour de la vérité. Je veux qu'on mette sur ma tombe (Ah! si elle pouvait être au milieu du cloître! Mais le cloître, c'est l'église, et l'église, bien à tort, ne veut pas de moi), je veux, dis-je, qu'on mette sur ma tombe: *Veritatem dilexi.* Oui, j'ai aimé la vérité; je l'ai cherchée, je l'ai suivie où elle m'a appelé, sans regarder aux durs sacrifices qu'elle m'imposait. J'ai déchiré les liens les plus chers pour lui obéir. Je suis sûr d'avoir bien fait. Je m'explique. Nul n'est certain de posséder le mot de l'énigme de l'univers, et l'infini qui nous enserre échappe à tous les cadres, à toutes les formules qui nous voudrions lui imposer. Mais il y a une chose qu'on peut affirmer; c'est la sincérité du cœur, c'est le dévouement au vrai et le sentiment des sacrifices qu'on a faits pour lui. Ce témoignage, je le porterai haut et ferme sur ma tête au jugement dernier."

I have tried, in the preceding pages, to convey to the mind of the reader some idea of the life and work, so far as I was acquainted with them, of one of the best and most interesting

men whom it has ever been my good fortune to know. About his purely philosophical speculations, those guesses into the infinite which lay far beyond the limits which appear to me to be assigned, for the present, to human knowledge, I have said little, for the very simple reason that they impressed me but little in comparison with those of his writings which were connected with things I better understood.

Mr. Lilly, who is, I believe, as competent as most people to discuss these high and transcendent questions, classes him, I observe, in *The Great Enigma* as a "Critical Agnostic." He never, so far as I know, described himself by any such title; but he was one of the most good-natured of human beings, and I am quite sure that if he had thought that it would give any one satisfaction so to label him, he would not have dreamt of objecting—nay, would have thought, perhaps, that the designation was not a bad one, provided always Agnostic was explained in what I understand to have been its original sense, that is a person who was *not* a Gnostic, or, in other words, who was not quite sure that he knew all about the ineffable mysteries with regard to which the gods remain silent. However this may be, I am certain he would have read with very deep interest and

with a good deal of agreement many parts of Mr. Lilly's able, fair-minded, and kindly book.

I am bound to add, however, that I do not think Mr. Lilly himself is more successful than Renan as long as he keeps in the region of metaphysics. The wisest and best lose their way the moment they enter that labyrinth. We have all around us, from this little speck of a world to the furthest limits which the telescope commands, endless subjects on which we can exercise our reasoning faculties, and, Heaven knows, this world, tiny as it is, affords a sufficiency. But our reasoning faculties are not so constructed as to cope with some of the gigantic questions with which Mr. Lilly deals, and of which the united ability even of the Metaphysical Society, of blessed memory, made so little. The *flammantia mœnia mundi* are not to be crossed by the human intellect. It is burned up in the attempt to cross them.

What, however, is quite impossible to our reasoning faculties is easy, is done every day, by what we may call, for want of better names, spiritual insight or intuition. To ignore the fact that there are tens of thousands of persons who live in direct communion with the Unseen, which some metaphysicians call the Absolute

but which they call God, and in virtue of that communion do a very large share of all the good things that are done on the planet, is simply ridiculous, as ridiculous as it is to refuse to see any other patent fact. The guidance that comes from this communion, and which we may call with Mr. Lilly the "inner light" or anything else we please, has been the kernel of all the higher religions. Every great faith of the world, says Mr. Lilly, "has originated in mysticism, and by mysticism it lives; for mysticism is what John Wesley called 'heart religion.' When this dies out of any creed, that creed inevitably falls into moribund decrepitude of mere formalism or superstition."

I should not be at all inclined to differ from Mr. Lilly when he points to the Catholic Church as able to show far the most perfect specimens of spiritual insight and excellence, nor with many other remarks of his on the same subject; but certainly, whatever may have been the case in the past, the doctrines of the Catholic Church are now not a help but a hindrance; and they will be more and more of a hindrance as people get to know more about the innumerable matters cognisable by our reasoning faculties, and by them alone, with regard to which the Catholic Church and all other churches have

committed themselves to hopelessly perverse opinions.

She and all other religious societies, which mean to last, have but one reasonable policy to pursue. They must give up trying to defend untenable outworks. They must devote themselves to helping men and women to develop, to the utmost, such faculty of spiritual insight as may be in them, by bringing into prominence the vast importance of goodness, and letting questions of correctness or incorrectness in matters of opinion, fall into the background. Every agency that can raise and stimulate the emotional nature should be pressed into the service. We do not any of us live by the bread of reason alone, and an uncommonly dull place the world would be if we did. For this purpose the Catholic Church has many resources. The Anglican has many too, especially in dealing with the upper classes. Both Ritualists and Broad Churchmen have, in their different ways, greatly increased its chances of a prosperous and useful future. If their younger leaders come to understand each other better, which does not seem impossible, the outlook for it as a religious organisation—I am not dealing in any way with its political prospects—would be highly satisfactory.

Lady Georgiana Fullerton described her own state of mind before her conversion in two very striking lines addressed to the Roman communion :—

> "For thy deep love my spirit yearned ; but trembled at thy creed,
> And, longing still to pluck the flower, refused to sow the seed."

She settled the question in the way in which persons whose emotional nature is stronger than their reasoning faculties would naturally settle it, and she did so much to the advantage of her own happiness ; but, to a very large portion of humanity, that resource is not open, and the tendency of the age is certainly to strengthen, even unduly, the reasoning at the expense of the emotional part of man, not only amongst educated persons, but amongst a large section of the artisan class.

If the breach between intelligence and the Church, which is very visible in some countries, is not to become wider everywhere, some concessions must be made, and the easiest way in which the ecclesiastical authorities can make them is not by unsaying much that they have said, but by treating it as of secondary importance, or, to use a phrase of Marcus Aurelius

as translated by Matthew Arnold, by "driving at the practice, and minding life more than notion."

There are innumerable people who say in effect to the priests, "We are perfectly willing to conform to your ideals; we are perfectly willing to co-operate with you in all good works; but you must not oblige us to believe that two and two make twenty-seven. In fact the basis of our agreement with you must be life, not notion."

My memory reverts to those meditations in Saint-Sulpice, alluded to at the end of my first chapter, which led to such different conclusions two seekers after truth, both full of genius, though genius very different in degree, both admirable in their lives, both deeply in earnest.

Of course it was inevitable in 1845 that a difference as to a question of opinion should entail for Renan a breach with all his old religious associations. Will it always be so?

In losing its hold over him the Catholic Church lost its hold over one of the most innately religious minds of our times. His was *Anima naturaliter Christiana*, if such there ever was. What possible chance is there that any of the great religious organisations should

preserve their hold over persons not so deeply religious by nature, unless they adopt some such policy as that which I have suggested, and invent some way whereby man may be allowed to see facts as they are, if he will only live and worship as they desire?

THE END

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